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ABSTRACT

Summarizing recent research, this seven-chapter report gives both characteristics and examples of effective schools and lists recommendations for achieving school effectiveness. Chapter 1 cites numerous recent studies to show that, in contradiction to earlier conclusions by James S. Coleman and Christopher Jencks, schools can be effective. Chapters 2 and 3 discuss a number of features of effective schools, including strong instructional leadership from principals, teacher effectiveness in managing the classroom and keeping students on task, a positive school climate, and curricula designed to meet students' specific educational needs. Examples of "maverick" schools in urban, suburban, and rural contexts, presented in chapters 4-6, illustrate how a wide variety of schools are effective, be they rich or poor, old or new, elementary or secondary, alternative or traditional, comprehensive or specialized, or vocational or academic. Chapter 7 reviews recommendations from educators, researchers, journalists, parents, and students for making schools effective. The recommendations involve school leadership and governance, staff skills, school expectations and monitoring of student performance, and community support. (RW)

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GOOD SCHOOLS

WHAT MAKES THEM WORK

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EDUCATION USA
SPECIAL REPORT

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Acknowledgement

Good Schools: What Makes Them Work was written by Cindy Tursman of Baltimore, Md., managing editor of *The School Administrator.*

Schools used in this report appear to have the characteristics of effectiveness described by educational researchers, but were not selected on the basis of a particular study. Nor are they in anyway a complete listing. Rather, they are examples recommended by researchers, journalists and educators. The editors wish to thank all those researchers and administrators who gave of their time to contribute their ideas to this report.

Good Schools: What Makes Them Work is one of a series of *EDUCATION USA* Special Reports designed to give educators and other interested persons concise and comprehensive information about current trends and issues in education. It was developed and produced by the *EDUCATION USA* Special Reports staff; Anne C. Lewis, executive editor; Sherry Freeland, senior editor; Kim F. Hasten, manager of editorial and production services; Mary Ann Johnson, production services; and Mark Oldach and Kim Hasten, graphics.

Chapter I

What Does the Research Say?

Can schools really make a difference in the achievement levels of students? What makes a child learn? Is it the way the lessons are taught? The way the school is run? The curriculum? Or, in the long run, do these factors not really matter, and is a child's academic fate determined, instead, by such "givens" as race, social class and economic status?

Interest in these questions has been great, particularly because some schools seem to be effective despite the odds. Also, there has been an effort to refute the "deterministic" view of learning and school effects which characterized much of the "school of thought" in the mid '60s and early '70s.

In 1966 James Coleman found "schools bring little influence to bear on a child's achievement that is independent of his background and general social context" (*Equality of Educational Opportunity*, or as it is more popularly known, the *Coleman Report*).

"Variations in what children learn at school," Christopher Jencks wrote in 1972, "depend largely on variations in what they bring to school, not on variations in what school offers them." (*Inequality: A Reassessment of the Effect of Family and Schooling in America*).

These dismal conclusions, while discouraging, nevertheless sparked research and subsequent findings which directly contradict them. Studies by George Weber, Wilbur Brookover, Ron Edmonds, Benjamin Bloom, Michael Rutter and others all show schools can and do make a difference in achievement levels for students. Moreover, many of these efforts have identified key characteristics of effective schools.

Weber, of the Council for Basic Education, was perhaps one of the earliest contributors to this research.

In 1971 Weber studied four instructionally effective inner-city schools in which poor children were clearly successful on the basis

of national norms. All four schools were characterized by strong leadership from the principal; high expectations for all students; an orderly atmosphere; an emphasis on reading skills; and frequent evaluation of student progress. Weber also found principals of effective schools were instrumental in setting instructional strategies and in organizing and distributing resources.

A performance review (1974) of two inner-city schools by New York state confirmed several of Weber's findings. While both schools served predominately poor student populations, one was "high-achieving" and the other "low-achieving." In direct contrast to Coleman's and Jencks' findings, the report demonstrated student performance was clearly under a school's control.

Strong leadership, planned goals and objectives, emphasis on reading skills and instructional methods all contributed to the successful performance of students at the "high-achieving" school.

Moreover, teachers in the effective school were more optimistic about their ability to have an impact on student achievement than teachers in the other school. Teachers in the low-achieving school tended to blame students' reading problems on non-school factors beyond their control.

More Studies, More Proof

J.V. Madden, et al. (1976) carried the research techniques used by Weber and the New York studies a step further by examining 21 pairs of elementary schools in California. Schools were matched on the basis of pupil characteristics and differed only in student performance on standardized achievement measures.

Among the findings: teachers in higher-achieving schools were more task-oriented in their classroom approach. They also reported more support from the principal, made greater use of teacher aides and outside resources and were generally more satisfied with their work than teachers in low-achieving schools. Classrooms in higher achieving schools also provided more evidence of monitoring student progress, happier children and an atmosphere more conducive to learning.

Brookover, of Michigan State U., conducted several similar studies involving school pairings but focused particular attention on "school climate" variables. In his 1977 study of six "improving" and two "declining" schools, for example, he found improving

> **"Teachers and principals in higher-achieving schools express the belief that students can master their academic work, they expect them to do so, and they are commited to seeing that their students learn to read, do mathematics and other academic work."**
>
> **Wilbur Brookover**
> ***Schools Can Make a Difference***

schools were characterized by an emphasis on goals and objectives in reading and math; evaluation of students; expectations that all students could learn; teachers who spent more time teaching; and principals who were instructional leaders. While he found parental involvement in these improving schools to be low, it was **parent** rather than school-initiated and favorably received by teachers.

Brookover's work is particularly important because in this and subsequent studies he attempted to isolate the impact that "school climate"—norms and expectations held by students and staff—has on student achievement.

These norms include students' sense of academic futility and staff expectations concerning student achievement.

In his examination of both paired and random Michigan elementary schools with similar socio-economic and racial compositions, Brookover found school climate had a more direct bearing on achievement than family background.

"Teachers and principals in higher achieving schools express the belief that students can master their academic work, they expect them to do so, and they are committed to seeing that their students learn to read, do mathematics and other academic work," Brookover wrote in *Schools Can Make a Difference* (1977).

He also found teachers in higher achieving schools spent more time teaching, grouped fewer students in "slow" groups and used clear and immediate positive reinforcement with students. Moreover, students in these schools felt the system wasn't "stacked against them" and teachers cared about their academic performance.

A number of other research findings have reinforced the belief that student family background neither causes nor precludes effective learning and have sought to identify characteristics of good schools. These include the work of Edmonds, Rutter and others.

Moreover, Bloom's research on factors that can be controlled or changed to improve learning has had a tremendous impact on classroom management, teacher behavior and views of the learner.

Edmonds, project director of Harvard U.'s research project, "Search for Effective Schools . . .," is currently heading up the School Improvement Project for the New York City Public Schools.

For the most part, the New York project builds on and applies Edmonds' earlier findings concerning effective schools for poor students in Lansing and Detroit, Mich.

These studies (1974-78) involved 20 schools in Detroit's Model Cities Neighborhood, a re-analysis of data from the 1966 Equal Educational Opportunity Survey (EEOS) and an analysis of data based on six school pairings in Lansing. Basically, Edmonds found, "The large differences in performance between the effective and ineffective schools could not . . . be attributed to differences in the social class and family background of pupils enrolled in the schools."

Moreover, from his study of five successful Lansing elementary schools and similar schools of Detroit, Edmonds says he found five major characteristics of effective schools:

- a positive climate of high expectations;
- strong administrative leadership;
- an orderly but not rigid atmosphere;
- an emphasis on basic skills;
- and an emphasis on student progress.

Schools in the New York City School Improvement Project—17 public and four non-public elementary schools at this count—are developing needs assessments, programs and implementation and evaluation strategies to achieve one or more of these five goals.

The View from London

Another major research effort which demonstrates the "positive effects of schooling" is *Fifteen Thousand Hours*, a book based on an extensive study of 12 secondary schools in poor London neighborhoods.

The findings of a research team headed by Rutter at the U. of

London clearly document that different schools can produce surprisingly different results with similar students.

"The findings showed that school differences were not just a reflection of intake patterns," according to the authors, ". . . Schools can do much to foster good behavior and attainments . . . even in a disadvantaged area, schools can be a force for the good."

Fifteen Thousand Hours (a reference to the number of hours children spend in school) is a carefully controlled study of school effects which are independent of student family background.

For example, School A and School B each admitted an equal proportion of 10-year-old boys (one-third of their enrollments) who had histories of behavior problems such as truancy, vandalism or insubordination. Four years later, however, fewer than 10% of the boys at School A had behavior problems while the proportion at School B had risen to 48%.

Moreover, although the schools admitted students of roughly the same intellectual range, a dull child entering one of the better schools had about the same statistical chance of scoring well on final examinations as a bright student entering one of the worst schools.

> **"Children are very quick to pick up other peoples' expectations about both their academic competence and their behavior."**
>
> **Michael Rutter, et al.**
> ***Fifteen Thousand Hours***

The researchers also found that improvements in achievement, behavior, delinquency rates and attendance tended to go hand-in-hand.

What accounts for the vast differences among schools?

Although the book does not claim to be the final word or that schools can "compensate for the inequalities of society," it does indicate that school "ethos" or climate not only has an impact on student progress but also offers considerable promise as a set of conditions and attitudes which can be changed to improve schools.

The authors say crucial conditions for change include academic emphasis, classroom management, school values and norms of behavior, feedback and staff attitudes.

Additional Studies

A major contributor to the research on variables which can be altered to improve achievement is Bloom of the U. of Chicago.

While not directly concerned with "school effects," Bloom's work, particularly in mastery learning, nevertheless has an important bearing on climate and classroom management.

Bloom found that through mastery learning techniques 80% of students can reach an achievement level formerly "reserved" for the top 20% taught by "traditional" means. This brought about an optimistic view of the learner and directly counters the "deterministic" view schools can do little to improve achievement levels of students (see Chapter 2).

The Phi Delta Kappa study of exceptional urban elementary schools—*Why Do Some Urban Schools Succeed?* (1980)—identifies a number of key variables for successful schools from case studies, research and evaluation studies and interviews with urban school researchers.

From eight case studies and a review of the literature, it concludes that the "principal principle," high expectations of staff, instructional programs linked to objectives, parental involvement and school environment are the most important elements.

The review of 40 evaluation studies identified leadership style, staff development, lower than usual student-teacher ratios, emphasis on achievement in basic skills, special funds for instructional support and involvement of parents as elements shared by successful schools.

Interviews with urban school researchers identified school leadership that motivates and supports teachers and teachers who concentrate on teaching as major elements for success. External funding support and well-defined school and curricular objectives were also important.

But the summary of all studies shows three groups of variables were more directly related to program success than others: leadership, teaching personnel and curriculum and instruction. Researchers also state that change must originate from within the school.

What Do Journalists Say?

Then, too, a number of journalists have been interested in finding out what makes an effective school. Sagging test scores, illiterate graduates, lax standards and other symptoms of decline

have caused serious concern throughout the past two decades. Journalists have watched and reported this decline.

But particularly within the past few years there appears to be a heightened interest and equal concern among journalists in searching for a "cure"—in studying and reporting characteristics of effective schools.

The six journalists who participated in the 1979 Journalism Research Fellowship Report, *What Makes an Effective School?*, studied a variety of rural, urban and suburban schools throughout the country. Their findings—backed up by observations and study—essentially substantiate the research findings.

Strong leadership by the principal, high expectations for teachers and students and "time on task" (the amount of time students are actually engaged in learning) are the dominant characteristics mentioned in their reports. But "community support" also emerges as an important factor, particularly for effective rural schools.

Wayne E. Reilly, a *Bangor Daily News* education reporter, said of his visits to rural schools:

"While visiting what appeared to me to be very effective schools, I became increasingly aware that a classroom is an organism within another organism, called a school, which in turn is affected by the community, the organism which nourishes it."

The finding that a school mirrors its community is not surprising, nor does it contradict the research. Most of the scholarly research on effective schools has focused on schools in urban settings. These schools have succeeded despite a host of factors—poverty, crime, illiteracy—which, while not peculiar to the communities city schools serve, are more prevalent in urban areas. The very intent of this research has been to isolate those elements which make schools effective despite such outside factors. It has deliberately examined schools as microcosms in order to "control" for outside influences—whether positive or negative—which affect student achievement.

While community support played a greater part in some accounts than others, all six journalists came to pretty much the same conclusions: effective schools are run by strong leaders who know how to use resources—time and people—effectively. Moreover, while these leaders may vary in their approach, they all set and maintain consistent standards.

Robert Benjamin, a *Cincinnati Post* reporter found good principals to be instructional leaders who spend at least half their time in classrooms and corridors rather than behind their desks.

They also put academic progress of students first, set consistent expectations and "attempt to hand pick their staff," despite teachers' unions and "the bureaucracy."

Benjamin, studying successful schools for low-income urban students, found strong educators taking responsibility for educating children as well as students achieving at levels which contradict Coleman's notion, mentioned earlier, that schools can do little to alter student performance.

In successful schools in Baltimore, M. William Salganik, education writer for the *Baltimore Sun*, found that "although the principals vary in leadership style and philosophy, . . . all have ideas they follow consistently, and all expect—even demand—teachers to teach and students to learn."

He also found the primary difference between average city schools and "schools that work" was in the use of classroom time. According to logs kept over more than 64 hours of classroom time, teachers in effective schools spent an average of about two-thirds of their time actively teaching. In other schools, the average was less than half.

Also, Salganik reports that in effective schools, teachers and students move quickly from activity to activity.

And teachers at the effective schools "are not charismatic figures generating unforgettable experiences. They are simply hard-working, organized teachers moving efficiently through a planned day," Salganik says.

Additional observations by researchers from Johns Hopkins U. also demonstrated the quality of instruction to be higher in effective schools—students spent considerably more time actually receiving instruction from the teacher than they did in doing "seatwork."

While numerous journalistic accounts have focused on the troubles facing America's schools, these accounts frequently point to what is needed by contrast. The Gannett News Service *Special Report on American Education* identifies problems facing schools in the '80s as lack of time on task, a free-wheeling or inappropriate curriculum, poor teachers and poor school climate.

Chapter 2

Leadership and Climate

Effective schools appear to be characterized by strong leadership and a positive school climate which is conducive to learning.

Principals of effective schools are strong instructional leaders who know how to manage time and people efficiently and effectively.

Much has been said and written about the "principal principle"—the principal as the primary catalyst in successful schools. Several studies have examined the characteristics which appear to distinguish "good" principals from "poor" ones in schools which are successful with disadvantaged children. Others have examined leadership styles, behavior, time allocation and a number of additional characteristics of effective principals regardless of institutional setting.

George Weber (1971) found principals of schools which were instructionally effective for poor children were instructional leaders who were also instrumental in organizing and distributing resources.

A Brookover-Lezotte (1979) study of "improving" and "declining" elementary schools in Michigan found principals of improving schools were assertive instructional leaders and strong disciplinarians who emphasized achievements and evaluation of basic objectives. By contrast, principals in declining schools appeared "to be more permissive and to emphasize informal and collegial relationships with the teachers. They put more emphasis on general public relations and less emphasis upon evaluation of the school's effectiveness in providing a basic education for students."

Ronald Edmonds has said effective schools have "strong administrative leadership without which the disparate elements of good schooling can neither be brought together nor kept together."

The profile of the principal which emerges from these accounts is that of an instructional leader who knows how to marshall resources and people to get the job done.

This is not so unlike the classical definition of the principal as head teacher. Other studies not only confirm these findings but also examine effective principals in more detail.

A study of 60 "effective" senior high school principals by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (1979) found that the majority of principals felt their top priorities **should** be program development (curriculum, instructional leadership); personnel (evaluation, advising, conferencing, recruiting), and school management, in that order.

While these principals did not feel they actually **did** spend their time in precisely the same manner, nevertheless they were more successful than a random group of principals in controlling the amount of time they devoted to these priorities.

Those who did spend time as they intended credited the following reasons: ability to delegate; capable assistant principals; faith in competence of others; and concentration upon priority goals. Moreover, these principals felt they faced fewer administrative roadblocks and fewer constraints (had central office support, for example) than did the random group.

Overall, this suggests effective principals are able managers.

When asked what job conditions contributed to job effectiveness, the principals listed a quality, supportive staff; cooperative, energetic students; encouragement by the central office; community support and job autonomy.

All of this suggests effective principals have a clear sense of purpose and priorities and are able to enlist the support of others toward these ends. This should not be interpreted, however, to mean that effective principals are autocrats. Leadership styles of effective principals vary with the circumstances and situations they face. Moreover, the effective principal's role may vary from director to facilitator on any given day in any given school.

It is likely, however, that a principal of a "poor" school will have to assume a "hard-line" to bring about results. Often this hard-line amounts to articulating and enforcing a clear set of consistent, obtainable standards to enable teachers to teach and students to learn.

The Effective Teacher

Similarly, effective teachers bring a clear sense of purpose to their task. This is not only communicated to students but is also reflected in their achievement gains.

While it is not the intent of this report to present a thorough overview of findings concerning effective teachers, several studies are important because they, too, zero in on the teacher as a "hard-liner" in so far as he/she insists that students learn.

A review of more than 280 studies of behavior differences between effective and ineffective teachers by Donald Medley of the U. of Virginia (1979) shows effective teachers run more orderly classrooms. While the effective teacher's classroom may not always be quiet, activity among students more likely reflects "task-related excitement" than student misbehavior.

Robert and Ruth Soar of the U. of Florida (1973) found most achievement gains occurred in classrooms where the climate could best be described as neutral: that is, where the teacher was neither severely critical of students nor overly lavish in praising them.

Teachers in these classrooms tend to sharply limit freedom of movement and socialization but encourage students to further explore ideas and concepts. Similarly, these teachers maintain an appropriate balance between self-directed and teacher-controlled learning activities.

Simply stated, effective teachers keep students on task. Even in more abstract learning activities these teachers allow freedom, self-initiative and choice within a clearly-defined structure.

Frederick McDonald's study (1973-74) of reading teachers shows that students may make more progress than would normally be expected on the basis of entering test scores, depending on the teaching techniques used. Similar to the studies of school effects discussed earlier, McDonald found teachers **can** and **do** make a difference in how much children learn.

Effective schools also have a positive school climate which is conducive to learning.

Wilbur Brookover (1978) defined climate as the norms and expectations held by members of the group—in this case the academic norms and expectations held by the students and staff of a school. In his study of Michigan elementary schools Brookover found school climate explained a significant amount of the variance between schools in mean achievement levels. Moreover, students' "sense of academic futility" clearly contributed more than any of the other variables to student achievement.

This variable is especially significant because it represents a cluster of items including "sense of control," reactions of fellow students to high achievement and students' perceptions of the concerns of teachers for academic success. In a school characterized by a high sense of academic futility, Brookover found students feel they have no control over their success or failure, teachers do not care if they succeed or not, and their fellow students punish them if they do succeed.

Further, this complex variable, coupled with evaluations and expectations of students by teachers and students' perception of those attitudes, explained more than 68% of the between-school variance in mean achievement in Brookover's statewide sample.

Moreover, school observations of high achieving, lower socioeconomic status (SES) schools revealed a number of important findings:

- Teachers in higher achieving schools spend a larger proportion of class time in instruction. This commitment was associated with greater concern for student achievement as well as positive interactions with students.
- Low SES schools tend to "write off" a larger proportion of the student body. For example, in one of the schools, nearly half of the students were placed in "slow" groups. In higher achieving schools very few students were so labeled.
- Schools with higher achievement are likely to use more instructional activities in which groups of students are competing as teams rather than individually.
- Teachers in higher achieving schools gave immediate and clear "feedback" to students, whereas in lower SES schools teachers gave "mixed signals"—positive reinforcement for incorrect answers.

The Brookover study (1979) of "declining" and "improving" schools mentioned earlier, further supports these findings. Among them:

- Staffs of improving schools tend to believe all of their students can master the basic objectives and, furthermore, the teachers perceive that the principal shares this belief.
- Staffs of improving schools hold higher levels of expectations with regard to the educational accomplishments of their students. Staffs of declining schools are much less likely to believe their students will complete high school or college.

- The higher levels of reported staff satisfaction and morale in the declining schools seem "to reflect a pattern of complacency and satisfaction" with the status quo—low expectations and poor achievement.

Goodlad: Self-Concepts and Schooling

Although U. of California at Los Angeles Dean John Goodlad, in *A Study of Schooling* (1979 and ongoing), includes what are essentially "climate" variables, he is not concerned with linking climate to achievement nor any other variable for that matter. Rather, his study of 38 schools is exploratory and descriptive. Yet, some of the trends Goodlad mentions concerning the study are useful to the discussion of school climate.

These include what Goodlad calls the "student and self" (personal domain); the "instructional" (classroom domain); and "the student in the school" (institutional domain). These are three elements within a larger framework, which also includes the societal domain. There is no doubt these elements cut across and influence one another, yet it is useful to consider several of Goodlad's preliminary findings concerning the three domains:

- General self-concept shows small but gradual increases as grade level rises; peer self-concept remains fairly stable; and academic self-concept shows a slight downward trend with increasing grade levels.
- Students who plan on some form of higher education have higher self-concepts (of all types) than those who plan to quit school, to just finish high school, or who don't know.
- Students who have higher self-concepts tend to participate in extra-curricular activities and feel it is easy to make friends at school.
- Because of "tracking," it is possible that several distinct student cultures not only exist, but limit the range of peer relationships at school.
- A greater percentage of parents and teachers expressed a desire for emphasis upon intellectual goals than did students. The arts, physical education and vocational/career education were liked by the largest percentages of students. Foreign language, science and social studies were reported to be liked by the smallest percentage. (Although these findings will also be discussed in the next section, it is interesting to note this trend in light of Brookover's finding that in

"Each teacher can and will change his or her belief in the learning capabilities of each student only by discovering this in the classroom."

Benjamin Bloom
All Our Children Learning

schools characterized by a high sense of academic futility, students felt their peers would "punish" them if they succeeded academically.)

Then, too, Benjamin Bloom's work in mastery learning, while more directly concerned with curriculum and instruction, nevertheless considers such variables as morale and expectations for academic success. In *All Our Children Learning*, for example, Bloom says:

> "I find that many of the individual differences in school learning are man-made and accidental rather than fixed in the individual at the time of conception. My major conclusion is 'What any person in the world can learn, almost all persons can learn if provided with appropriate prior and current conditions of learning.'"

This conclusion has led to a positive view of the learner—a view which both teachers and students come to hold as they experience "success."

As students begin to master skills, for example, their self-concept, confidence and outlook toward school improves. But more importantly, perhaps, teachers begin to raise their expectations for students as well. ("Each teacher can and will change his or her belief in the learning capabilities of each student only by discovering this in the classroom," Bloom says.)

Moreover, as Bloom notes, repeated success in school over a number of years appears to increase the likelihood that an individual can withstand stress and anxiety more effectively than individuals who have a history of repeated failure or low marks in school. In other words, success in school seems to lead to better mental health.

The concept of "ethos" in *Fifteen Thousand Hours* is similar to Brookover's school climate concept except that it is somewhat broader in scope and includes student peer groups. Yet essential

parallels can be drawn which demonstrate that school norms and values, as well as teacher expectations, affect student attitudes and achievement.

And Edmonds' concept of climate also establishes the important link between overall tone of the school and school effectiveness:

> Schools that are instructionally effective for poor children have a climate of expectation in which no children are permitted to fall below minimum but efficacious levels of achievement. The school's atmosphere is orderly without being rigid, quiet without being oppressive, and generally conducive to the instructional business at hand.

Summary

- Effective schools are characterized by strong instructional leaders who know how to manage time and people efficiently and effectively.
- Effective schools have a positive school climate which is conducive to learning.

Chapter 3

Curriculum and Instruction

Effective schools have curricula designed to meet the specific needs of students. Teachers also use instructional methods which keep students actively engaged in learning.

While many of the studies have stressed the importance of basic skills, especially in reading and math, it must be remembered the schools studied were frequently those serving students with skill deficiencies in these areas. One need only look at the Foxfire curricula used with students in the Appalachian mountains or the curricula of specialized high schools, for example, to appreciate that the curricula of effective schools are highly diverse.

Even with disadvantaged children, the emphasis appears to be on providing intense "catch up" experiences in basic skills, broadening curricular offerings and providing experiential learning when students are ready.

What becomes less important than **whether** and **to what extent** the curriculum of a particular school meets the learning needs of its students. Effective schools frequently go beyond "content" definitions of curriculum to stress values, respect for others and learning how to learn.

While curricula of effective schools vary with the needs of their students, they also reflect the needs of communities and society as a whole.

In urban areas there has been a move toward specialized high schools in the fine arts, technical and vocational fields, the sciences and the humanities. While providing students with academic core courses, these schools place special emphasis on preparing students for particular careers. Frequently students in these special programs are working in their field of interest while attending school.

Some educators argue that the role of the school should not be to "train workers," but many schools are effective because they do

precisely that—meet a societal demand for competent workers as well as meet students' needs to become productive in society.

At the same time, however, public demand to restore or improve academic course offerings is having a profound influence on curricula of some schools, particularly at the secondary level.

There is a deep concern that foreign language instruction, science and technology, global education, computer science, advanced mathematics, writing, the fine arts, civic education, economics and a number of other academic areas were neglected or sacrificed during the "retreat" to the basics or what John Goodlad has referred to as the "dismal decade."

A number of reports by the federal government, professional associations, commissions and foundations have cited the severe neglect of both science and the humanities during the 1970s.

Recent reports by both the Commission on the Humanities and the National Science Foundation indicate this neglect is extremely perilous because the problem-solving and critical thinking skills these fields require have been largely neglected as well.

"THE HUMANITIES IN AMERICAN LIFE"

The 1980 report of the Commission on the Humanities, "The Humanities in American Life," urges educators to restore a broad perspective to humanities study and encourage well-tempered thought about important issues:

> . . . We urge educators to view the humanities in terms of the links between skills, knowledge of cultural traditions, aesthetic judgment and enjoyment, and moral values. Teachers, librarians, administrators, and public officials must distance themselves from mercurial public moods, when necessary, and recall for everyone the broad educational goals of American schools.

Then, too, scholars and professionals in all fields are deeply troubled by not only a general decline of U.S. superiority in world

markets, science and technology, but also with a kind of American "provincialism" or "elitism" which chooses to ignore or dismiss other cultures rather than encourage and develop the verbal, perceptual and imaginative skills needed to understand them—skills upon which America's survival as a world leader may depend.

In many ways, these skills have become the "survival skills" of the '80s. Many effective schools have recognized this by expanding or upgrading their curricula, particularly in such areas as foreign language, economics and computer science.

Basics

That an emphasis on basic skills is important to disadvantaged children is evident from the research cited earlier. Wilbur Brookover found teachers and principals in improving schools were more likely to assume responsibility for teaching and evaluating basic reading and math skills. Ronald Edmonds found:

> Effective schools get that way partly by making it clear that pupil acquisition of basic school skills takes precedence over all other school activities. When necessary, school energy and resources can be diverted from other business in furtherance of the fundamental objectives.

The Community and Action Learning

Many effective schools draw on their communities—whether urban or rural—as a rich curriculum resource.

Eliot Wigginton, who started the *Foxfire* magazine with his ninth and tenth grade English classes, has helped students draw on the vast people and environmental resources in the Appalachian Mountains of northern Georgia to produce publications, television programs for cable-TV, a series of record albums of traditional music and investigations of the environmental and political affairs of the community.

Wigginton believes "all courses, to the fullest extent possible, should be experiential—rooted in the real." He also feels students and teachers must be engaged directly with the community-at-large, forging two-way relationships that not only educate, "but also endure and make a difference in the quality of life."

ROLE OF THE SCHOOL
(from the introduction to *Foxfire 6*)

- To develop the basic skills and basic academic knowledge of students.
- To develop and nourish the more esoteric appreciations and understandings—the arts, the humanities, the areas of human artistic and moral sensitivity and concern for life on this globe—and the ways to express those appreciations and concerns through action.
- To develop and foster the qualities students must have for success in any career—curiosity, self-confidence and self-esteem, patience and persistence, vision, leadership, wisdom, the ability to think creatively, to analyze and problem-solve, to make humane and wise decisions and to act on them.

Francis Chase (1978) of the Council of the Great City Schools, examined nearly 600 successful programs in 30 urban school systems and conducted site visits in five cities. He found successful programs emphasized active ties to the community:

> One characteristic common to these programs is the emphasis on action-learning or involvement in firsthand experience in places of employment, the performing arts, or other situations in which special skills can be developed along with a deepened sense of responsibility for the effects of one's behaviors on others and on the achievement of goals. Another common characteristic of these programs is that students get firsthand acquaintance with the values and behaviors which operate in different occupations.

Moreover, students in these programs take advantage of vast "city curriculum" resources--science and art centers, museums and experts in a number of fields—to supplement school experiences.

It should be obvious the curriculum of effective schools is more than a body of content to be learned in isolation from real world experiences. Also, students are learning more than job skills. In many cases they are developing appreciation and understanding of "the human condition" through the arts, the humanities and

direct interaction with people in their communities. They are also learning how to make decisions, take responsibility for their actions and improve their environment.

Beyond the Basics

A number of educators have called for curricular reform in American schools. A leader in this effort is Goodlad of the U. of California at Los Angeles. In *What Schools Are For* and a number of articles concerning his *A Study of Schooling*, Goodlad has said the curriculum should be restructured with four broad educational goals in mind: intellectual, citizenship, vocational and personal.

An ardent critic of "behavioral reductionism" or a narrow focus on basics, Goodlad says parents not only want a well-balanced curriculum but educators, must lead a "pedagogical renaissance at all levels of schooling and in all fields" to ensure students are getting a broad education based on these four goals of schooling.

In his surveys of more than 17,000 students in 38 schools, Goodlad found students rank the arts, vocational education and physical education as their favorite subjects. They also rate "good-looking students and athletes" as the most popular people in school.

"Teachers must motivate students, create excitement about academic subjects and provide role models in a number of fields," Goodlad says.

He has found that something "deadly" seems to happen to academic subjects as they enter the classroom: "One has difficulty finding teachers doing and showing . . . . There is a kind of dedication to telling and questioning youngsters, a general flatness."

Instruction and Management

Teachers in effective schools use teaching techniques which keep students actively engaged in learning. Moreover, both classroom and building-wide management practices reflect a respect for the learning process and the learner.

In this regard, it is frequently difficult to tell in effective schools where "tangible" management practices, such as infrequent use of the intercom, the elimination of bells or well-kept attendance records, leave off and "intangible" climate variables, such as student sense of responsibility or respect for self and others, begin. Similarly, it is frequently difficult to draw clear-cut distinctions between "intangible" teaching techniques like fairness, consistency and respect for students and "tangible" management practices such as homework assignments, evaluation and organizational skills.

While the subject of effective teaching techniques deserves a report of its own, it is fairly safe to say that instructional methods used in effective schools include attention to time on task, consistent teacher cues, reinforcement, mastery learning, action learning and team learning.

Successful management practices include clear and consistent evaluation (which includes knowing when and how to use the above techniques with what students), organizational skills and creative leadership.

Time on Task

Scores of studies have demonstrated the high correlation between what is commonly called "time on task" or the amount of time students are actively engaged in learning versus allocated time for instruction and other refinements of this term such as academic learning time.

A six-year study funded by the National Institute of Education (NIE), the *Beginning Teacher Evaluation Study*, found that academic learning time—the amount of time a student spends engaged in academic tasks of **appropriate difficulty**—is positively related to student achievement.

This distinction is important because it implies effective teachers know how to diagnose and prescribe learning activities which neither frustrate students because they are too difficult nor hold students back because they are too easy.

It also indicates effective management strategies such as monitoring and evaluation are an integral part of effective instructional techniques.

Charles Fisher and other researchers who logged academic learning time in more than eleven elementary schools found:

- The teacher's accuracy in diagnosing student skills is related to both student achievement and academic learning time.
- The teacher's prescription of appropriate tasks is related to student achievement and student success rate.

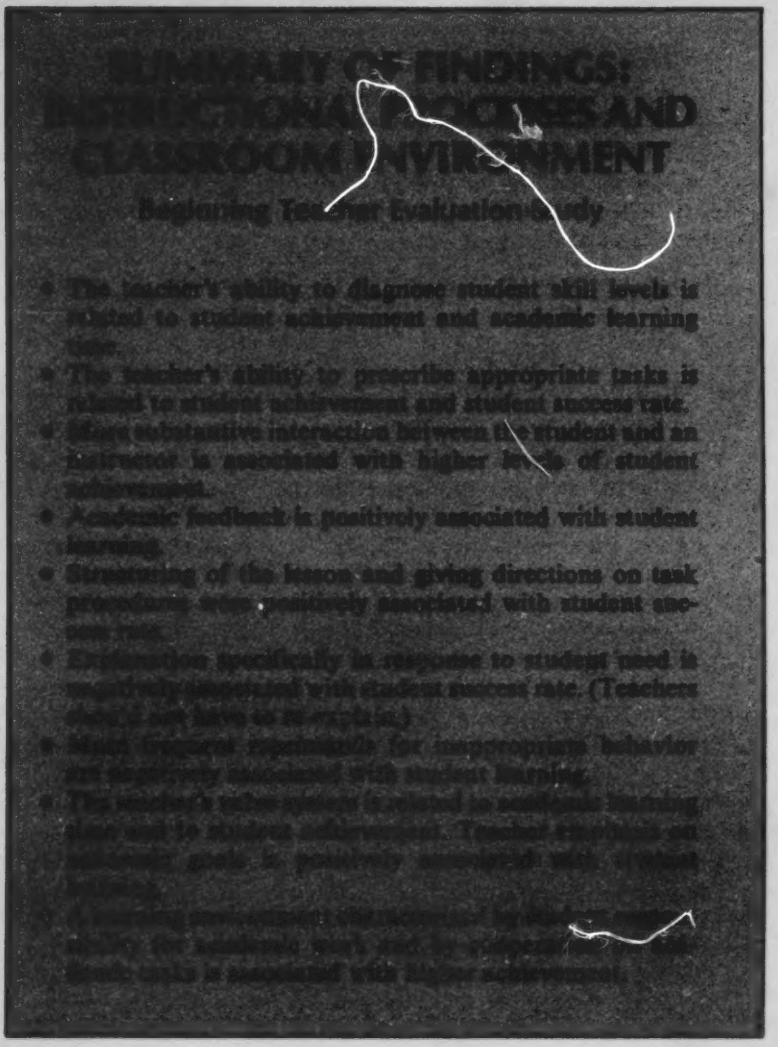
A summary of the major NIE study findings by Barak Rosenshine includes several interesting facts which indicate how effective teachers manage time in the classroom:

- On the average, students spent 1 hour and 30 minutes (second grade) and 1 hour and 55 minutes (fifth grade) actively engaged in reading and math activities. In the highest classrooms, the engaged time was about 30 minutes longer, and in the lowest classrooms, it was about 30 minutes less than the average.
- During allocated time for academics, students were not engaged about 16 minutes an hour, on the average. Half of this non-engaged time was taken up with interim activities (e.g., passing out and collecting papers) or waiting for help, and the other eight minutes were when students were clearly off task. Classrooms were fairly similar in interim and wait time, whereas the most efficient teachers reduced off-task time to four minutes per hour.

Teacher Cues

The NIE study already cited and a number of other studies show that teacher cues—structuring the lesson and giving directions on task procedures—are associated with high student success.

Benjamin Bloom (1976) estimates that quality of cues amounts for about 14% of the variance in achievement between students. As has already been mentioned, effective teachers give consistent and clear reinforcement for correct responses and behaviors and are neither severely critical nor overly "lavish" in praising students.



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS: INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES AND CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

Beginning Teacher Evaluation Study

- The teacher's ability to diagnose student skill levels is related to student achievement and academic learning time.
- The teacher's ability to prescribe appropriate tasks is related to student achievement and student success rate.
- More substantive interaction between the student and an instructor is associated with higher levels of student achievement.
- Academic feedback is positively associated with student learning.
- Structuring of the lesson and giving directions on task procedures were positively associated with student success rate.
- Explanations specifically in response to student need is negatively associated with student success rate. (Teachers should not have to explain.)
- Minor teacher reprimands for inappropriate behavior are negatively associated with student learning.
- The teacher's value system is related to academic learning time and to student achievement. Teacher emphasis on academic goals is positively associated with student achievement.
- A classroom management system that emphasizes student accountability for academic work and for appropriate behavior (with rewards for both) is associated with higher achievement.

Evaluation

Whether defined as an instructional technique or management strategy, it is clear that evaluation—both immediate and long-term—is a characteristic of effective schools.

This does not suggest the evaluation need be letter grades nor any one particular system, but evaluation should be fair, consistent and clearly tell students what they can do to improve or how they can explore materials further. Under mastery learning, for example, considerable emphasis is placed upon formative (instructive) testing which directs students to additional practice or enrichment material. Moreover, some effective schools use narrative evaluations and conferences with parents in lieu of grades.

Regardless of the format used it is clear that effective schools use frequent formal and informal evaluation methods which are built into the instructional program.

Mastery Learning

Mastery learning is a teaching method which incorporates time on task, teacher cues, reinforcement and evaluation, but the manner in which this is done is derived from the work of Carroll (1963) and Bloom (1974, 1976).

Bloom's work in mastery learning is built upon Carroll's discovery that aptitude is the amount of time required by the learner to attain mastery of a given subject or learning task rather than a measure of intelligence. Both Carroll and Bloom have found that given **sufficient** time and **appropriate** learning conditions, 95% of students can learn a subject to a high level of mastery. Moreover, Block (1971) and others have found that under mastery learning, some 80% of students can reach the same level of achievement formerly "reserved" for the top 20% of students taught under "traditional" conditions.

Crucial variables which can be altered and controlled to achieve these results include time on task, prerequisite skills, use of formative (instructive) rather than summative (achievement) tests and quality of teaching, according to Bloom.

These findings have not only brought about a more optimistic view of the learner, but in many cases have placed the individual, his or her rate of learning, and the skills to be mastered sequentially at the center of the teaching-learning process rather than the bell-shaped curve, competition and rank grading.

Mastery learning does **not**, however, prescribe a single mastery approach nor imply the same approach is appropriate for all students in all subjects. It **does** focus attention on variables which teachers can control or alter in the learning process, notably time on task, formative testing and corrective activities or additional practice to accommodate differences among students.

Bloom indicates that while the amount of time students need for a particular kind of learning task has not been studied directly, he finds the ratio of time required by slower and faster learners may be roughly 6 to 1 (if the extreme cases are eliminated). As instruction and student use of time become more effective, however, Bloom suggests the ratio can be cut in half, "from about 6 to 1 to perhaps 3 to 1."

Bloom has also noted that mastery learning may be more difficult to implement within given time constraints (e.g., terms, semesters) and given subjects (those which require a number of prerequisite skills like advanced mathematics). This would not, however, rule out subjects like algebra or logic.

Bloom's theories are being tested in a number of schools at the elementary, secondary and higher education levels. Researchers and educators, particularly in elementary schools, are finding that students are making tremendous achievement gains under mastery learning. It is not surprising, then, to find effective schools in Dallas, Denver, Chicago, New York and elsewhere using mastery learning.

It should **not** be inferred, however, that to be effective a school must use a particular mastery learning approach nor that all schools or teachers be able to implement mastery learning to the same degree. However, it **can** be inferred that effective teachers (and schools) accept the basic principles of mastery learning and attempt to use them to provide optimum learning opportunities for individual students. This includes particular attention to what Carroll (1963) defines as the quality of instruction, "the degree to which the presentation, explanation and ordering of elements of the task to be learned approach the optimum for a given learner."

Team Learning

Team learning also shows considerable promise not only for increasing achievement but also for improving school climate variables such as self-concept, positive intergroup relations and student attitudes toward school.

Brookover's studies (1978) concerning school climate, for example, show that high achieving, low socio-economic schools are likely to use more instructional activities in which groups of students are competing as teams rather than individually.

Although there are many types of team learning techniques, several which have been more widely researched than others include Jigsaw (Aronson), Teams-Games-Tournaments (DeVries) and Student Teams-Achievement Divisions (Slavin).

The Jigsaw method—where academic material is broken down into parts and students study and "teach" one another—was first investigated as a way to increase students' liking of others in integrated classes. However, research, while limited, shows black and Chicano students in the Jigsaw classes learned more than their counterparts in traditional classes (Lucker, Rosenfield, Sikes and Aronson, 1976).

Teams-Games-Tournaments (TGT)—where individual team members compete in tournaments with members of other teams to add points to their team score—has been evaluated in ten studies involving nearly 3,000 students across the country. In seven of the studies, TGT students learned significantly more than students in "traditional" classes studying the same materials, but in no study did they learn less. The effectiveness of TGT in increasing the learning of basic skills has been demonstrated in grades three through nine (DeVries, Slavin, 1978).

And in Student Teams-Achievement Divisions (STAD)—where students work in teams and then take individual quizzes to make points for their team—four studies showed the technique was significantly more effective than traditional methods in increasing basic skills learning, particularly for black students (Slavin, 1977b). In two studies STAD and "traditional" methods were equally effective (Slavin, 1978b).

Management

Just as teachers in effective schools monitor student progress through frequent evaluation, they also know **how** and **when** to use different teaching techniques with different students. This includes scheduling varying amounts of time for group as well as individual instruction and study.

The Robert and Ruth Soars' studies (1973) mentioned earlier showed that effective teachers use different amounts of group and

individual instruction depending upon grade level and content to be taught. They also created "an appropriate balance between student self-direction and teacher control of learning activities." Moreover, the teachers used only moderate amounts of any one "good" technique.

The studies found student achievement gains were tied to the degree to which the teacher structured different levels of learning activities. Gains in low-level tasks such as memorization most frequently occurred in highly structured activities, whereas gains in more complex learning were greater when students were allowed more self-initiative and choice.

Effective teachers also possess good organizational skills. Objectives, lessons plans, materials, activities, evaluation material and record-keeping are planned in advance. Good organizational skills enable effective teachers to make the best use of academic learning time and to monitor, control, pace and direct each learning activity.

As Rutter and other researchers have found, students achieve more in schools where teachers start teaching promptly when classes begin, keep students on task and check homework.

The authors of *Fifteen Thousand Hours* and other researchers have also found that schools in which a high proportion of children "held some kind of position of responsibility in the school system had better outcomes with respect to both pupil behavior and examination success." Similarly, teachers gave students more responsibility for taking care of materials and participating in meetings and assemblies.

In this way, staffs of effective schools exercise leadership and serve as positive role models for students.

As Michael Rutter notes, standards of behavior in school are set by the behavior of the staff. Rutter cites the work of Bandura (1969) which shows children "not only . . . copy specific behaviors, but also tend to identify in a more general way with the people whom they follow, and come to adopt what they perceive to be their values and attitudes." This means students are influenced by how teachers and staff interact with one another and assume responsibility for the total school; teacher willingness to help students; teacher attitudes toward student responsibility; teachers' use of time and organizational skills; and a number of other behaviors.

All of these behaviors convey to students how the staff of a school feels about the school, the learning process and students themselves. Even seemingly insignificant practices like frequent

interruptions over the intercom convey strong messages to students about staff attitudes toward learning.

Summary

Effective schools have curricula designed to meet the specific needs of students.

Teachers in effective schools use teaching techniques which keep students actively engaged in learning. Moreover, both classroom and building-wide management practices reflect a respect for the learning process and the learner.

Chapter 4

Urban Mavericks

During the 1970s many urban educators recognized that no less than a total overhaul of the curriculum was needed. In his study of urban schools and site visits, Francis Chase (1978) found the following conditions essential for successful revitalization of urban education: an equitable allocation of resources; change from a prescriptive to a responsive curriculum; use of the total urban environment; and system-renewal strategies.

In *Urban Education: The City as a Living Curriculum.* H. Prentice Baptiste Jr., and James Anderson stress that the curriculum of any school is value-laden, and, further, the curricula of urban schools must emphasize constructive social action, and cultural values. Although curriculum plays an important role in any school, it must be extremely varied, vital and "alive" to meet the needs of urban students.

Sometimes curriculum changes were made in the midst of turmoil and racial unrest. Chase (1978) notes many of the creative solutions devised by urban educators:

- Urban education has an inner vitality which is generating innovative programs and strategies of great potential, even in the midst of extremely adverse conditions.
- There is a deepening concern for the needs not well-served by traditional schooling.
- An increasing number of community agencies and groups are joining with schools to develop enriched environments for learning, and the gulf between schools and society is being bridged in many ways.

- Innovative programs and alternatives are producing significant changes in the character of education provided at both the elementary and secondary levels.

Effective urban schools have found creative ways to use the city as a curriculum resource and it is frequently the principal who plays a major role in rallying public and private sector support for programs.

Alternative Schools and Career Education

The Dallas (Texas) Independent School District is considered to be one of the early pioneers in career education. In the early 1970s it opened a Skyline Career Development Center and later added six magnet high schools in the arts, business and management, health professions, transportation, human services, and public services and law. Career education "clusters" now exist in all the magnet high schools and the comprehensive high schools which offer preparation in a wide range of occupations.

The Far West High School in Oakland, Calif., offers a program of academic subjects, career awareness, and basic and social skills. Regional Occupation Centers, which serve Oakland and neighboring districts, offer career training and special programs in a number of areas including banking occupations, auto insurance, color photography and respiratory therapy.

Alternative programs in Atlanta include Project Propinquity and Schools Without Walls. The Atlanta and Fulton County schools, in cooperation with the Vocational Division of the State Dept. of Education, operate a large modern vocational-technical school.

PEP, developed in Toledo, Ohio, is a pre-employment program for dropouts and delinquents. Students are taught work and interpersonal skills, placed in internships or on-the-job training or are recommended for full-time employment. The Toledo Public Schools also developed a career specialty program which has since been adopted in Milwaukee. The Milwaukee high schools offer training in fields ranging from agriculture to word processing.

I.C. Norcom High School in Portsmouth, Va., is a special four-year, career-oriented school offering courses in fashion design, medical technology, broadcasting and other areas. Students must maintain a "C" average to stay in the program, and the school has

earned a good reputation in the area. The school has the city's highest attendance rate, lowest dropout rate and the best record of sending graduates to college.

Learning Unlimited is an alternative program at North Central High School in Indianapolis. Initially funded for three years by Lilly Endowment as a model program, the project is now supported by local funds. Approximately 10% of the 3,400 students attend all or part of their classes in the program which offers:

√ **Learning contracts.** Students are accountable for developing an individualized program of study that meets personal needs and goals beyond minimum state requirements.

√ **Competencies.** Instructional outcomes are based upon demonstrated competencies.

√ **Challenge experiences.** Each student is required to arrange for and fulfill challenge experiences in the areas of adventure, cognitive skills, creativity, futurism, practical skills, research and service to others.

√ **Walkabout.** Students are encouraged to participate in community-based learning.

The academic program is competency-based and includes field experiences such as internships, volunteer work and research projects. The program emphasizes community learning, including long-term service projects and publications. Graduates of the program who are now in college report it was helpful in developing composition skills, other basic academic skills, self-direction, time management and resourcefulness in using extra classroom resources.

The Arts in Education

In 1970 two music programs—Success Through Strings and Learning Through Piano—were introduced in Dunbar Elementary School in Dallas. These programs, developed by the Dunbar Community Learning Center, were among the first of their kind to demonstrate overall achievement gains for students. A majority of the students who participated in these programs advanced academically from two or more years below grade level to grade level or above.

The Elm Creative Arts Elementary School in Milwaukee, Wis., the Arts Magnet High School in Dallas, Fiorella La Guardia High School of Music and the Arts in New York City and similar

schools in Cincinnati, Washington, D.C., Winston-Salem, N.C., and elsewhere are indicative of the renaissance in both education and the arts taking place in inner cities.

Frequently, these schools are housed in restored buildings and are an integral part of city-wide revitalization efforts.

One such school is the Baltimore School for the Arts located in the old Alcazar Hotel in downtown Baltimore, Md. A federal anti-recession grant enabled the city to purchase the building. An additional $600,000 from the city, $200,000 from the state and a special task force appointed by Supt. John Crew got the building renovation and program plans underway in 1977.

The elegant ballrooms, archways, winding staircases and meeting halls have been preserved and converted to dance and art studios and performance space. The old hotel already came equipped with a swimming pool and the guest rooms now provide individual practice rooms for music students. The school also has a "separate" academic wing. The building is light, spacious and ideally suited for art and performance areas.

The staff, a mix of artistic and academic faculty, consists of nine full-time academic teachers (including one librarian and guidance counselor), seven full-time teachers in dance, music, theatre and the visual arts and an academic dean and an artistic dean.

From more than 900 student applicants, 133 were selected for the first year of the program (1980-81 school year). Theatre, dance and music students auditioned as part of the application process; art students submitted portfolios of their work and were interviewed. Many of the students attended after-school sessions held the previous year to prepare for the opening of school.

David Simon, dean of the Manhattan School of Music from 1970-79, is the director of the school. He says one of the goals of the program is to help students learn what it's like to "make a career decision to be in the arts."

At first there was some opposition to the school—those who felt the school was getting special treatment or artists who felt it would be "just another public school." But Simon—former freelance musician and professor of education at New York U.—is committed to building an exemplary arts and academic program. He says the artistic community in Baltimore and such institutions as Center Stage, the Peabody Institute, The Walters Art Gallery and the Maryland Institute have given the school tremendous support.

"I hope to set a tone among teachers and students to make this school different in positive ways and to help students develop self-

discipline," Simon says. As a reflection of this philosophy, the school has no bells, and Simon makes spartan use of the intercom.

"I think there is a balance here between academic subjects and the arts. This school has the potential to provide kids with a new lease on life within the normal school system. And no other public or private school can say it gives professional education in the arts to the extent and on the level that we do, he says."

The schedule in both art and academic subjects is rigorous—four 50-minute periods of academic subjects and four 50-minute periods of art subjects, accomplished through an extended school day.

Simon says plans include a special outreach program to build a strong string and dance program for fifth-eighth grade students, an orchestra for the high school and a foundation to purchase instruments and other needed equipment and materials.

Comprehensive High Schools

George W. Wingate High School in Brooklyn has the best attendance rate and college admissions test scores of any comprehensive city high school in New York City. The school has been the subject of a CBS documentary and has earned a national reputation as a "born-again high school"—a school which has done a complete about face since the violence and disruption which characterized it in the early 1970s.

The school has a Teacher Training Institute which provides training sessions for assistant principals and teachers; printing classes and facilities and an extensive reading program.

The curriculum includes math courses ranging from remedial math to calculus, bilingual programs and a number of career education programs including printing, flight training, house construction, commercial arts, business education, medical science and occupational skills. Seniors in their third year of the Medical Science Program, for example, serve internships in nearby hospitals. Relatively new career education programs include a Legal Institute, a Television and Radio Institute and an Alpha Program for ninth-grade students with poor academic records.

The school also has a high school equivalency program, a four-year honors program and comprehensive programs for the gifted and talented. Moreover, the school recently added a Behavioral Studies Institute for students interested in psychology, philos-

ophy, sociology and anthropology. It already had both the Labor Studies and Leisure Studies Institutes.

Wingate faculty members not only train educators in New York City and other school systems, they also write and produce a number of teacher training guides, videotapes, curriculum materials and textbooks.

Robert Schain is the "principle principal" behind the school's success. What is the first thing you do when you step into the principalship of a troubled school?

"Find out what the problems are and what is causing them. Think of alternatives and develop solutions," Schain says. "If you deal with symptoms, the school climate will change."

This is precisely what Schain did in developing a number of special programs, including flight training. Originally designed to motivate students with poor school records, the program has not only generated tremendous enthusiasm but has improved academic performance.

"You must motivate students by starting with what interests them," Schain says.

Schain also feels staff training and development must be a top priority and it is the principal's responsibility to "turn a poor school around, to demonstrate to the community that the school can work—to make it a school parents will demand to send their children to."

Good principals need excellent training, curriculum development and human relations skills, Schain says, "but, unfortunately, too many principals have to get on-the-job training because no program really provides administrators with the exposure and training needed."

New Life for an "Oldie"

Said to be the second-oldest high school in the country, Portland High School in Maine is proud of its tradition. The $1 million high school with its 1,500 students is the outgrowth of a Latin school for boys which began in 1831 with only 20 students.

It is said the school is only "three days younger" than Boston Latin.

While Portland's academic record is not particularly outstanding, a number of recent projects seem to be breathing new life into the school, including several from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

One grant was awarded to begin a two-year ethics program. The units involve learning the use of evidence in judgment, having respect for others and exploring such areas as moral imagination, character and virtue. Both parents and students may participate in the courses.

One of the visiting scholars in the project, Andrew Oldenquist of Ohio State U., says the purpose of the project is to "help the student to think more deeply, to weigh the evidence and to evaluate the alternatives—to help the students diagnose facts and avoid foolishness."

Another project—the Architects in the School Project—enabled students and staff to make a number of internal improvements to the building including converting an old closet into an art office.

Still another project is a series of workshops in leadership for students selected by their peers and screened through tests designed to determine leadership capacity. The course, which draws on local leaders and visiting faculty, is a pilot project designed to identify future leaders and help them realize their potential.

The course meets off-campus. Students read literature in the field of leadership, such as Sophocles' *Antigone* and Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*. They also select international leaders for indepth study and discuss leadership styles. Students are apprenticed to local leaders and explore leadership skills such as group process, task definition and research. Juniors and seniors (and their parents) at the two high schools in Portland have been invited to attend a challenging course, *Scientia Ipsa Potestas Est* ("knowledge itself is power") to be held on weekends. Reading for the course includes *The Merchant of Venice*, the poetry of Emily Dickinson, the *Aeneid* and *Animal Farm*.

Reginald MacDonald, the school's principal, says many potential problems existed when he became principal several years ago. His top priorities were to improve school climate by building up the athletic and music programs and the overall curriculum.

"It was important to hire good people in key positions such as reading. Several years ago 30% of our students were in remedial reading 'pull out' programs—that figure has dropped to 17%," MacDonald says.

He also says many of the students were weak in the humanities and history, so the staff revamped these programs based upon specific skills in which the students were deficient. Class cutting was also a problem so he devised a plan which links attendance and

punctuality to grades and organized the structure to place students with the same homeroom teacher for four years.

"Teachers get to know the students well and can anticipate problems before they arise," MacDonald says.

A committee of 10 to 12 teachers meets monthly to discuss school policies regarding discipline and other matters. Often this group devises strategies for handling potential problems.

"As an administrator you can't be afraid to let teachers come up with ideas. If it works, use it," MacDonald says.

But the principal has to make some tough decisions on his/her own. One of these is the decision to fire staff if necessary because "if you're going to have a strong school those decisions have to be made," MacDonald says.

MacDonald is also a strong supporter of staff development and makes use of the National Resource Network to plan inservice programs. Teachers have 10 days of release time per year to attend seminars and workshops. One of the more recent workshops was the National Writing Workshop to train teachers to teach writing. "A principal must encourage teachers to participate in such projects," MacDonald says. "They come back invigorated and it really carries over to their work."

Specialized High Schools for the Talented

Detroit, New York, Philadelphia, Boston and other older cities have had selective schools for a number of years—Bronx High School for Science, Stuyvesant High, Brooklyn Tech., Boston Latin, and Renaissance High.

But a new special state boarding school opened recently in Durham—the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics— may reflect a concern about United States leadership in science and engineering.

The facility, an abandoned hospital donated by Durham County, has received substantial donations for renovations. Of the 900 applicants to the school, 150 eleventh graders were selected for the first year of the program. And the faculty is an extremely select group. About 500 applicants applied for the 15 teaching jobs; more than half of the faculty have doctorate degrees.

Chuck Eilber, former director of the Interlochen Arts Academy, is the director of the school. Because many parents expressed a

concern about students living at the school, Eilber says a key criterion for selecting teachers, besides professional background, was that they be "student-oriented."

In addition to science and math, the school has strong humanities, foreign language and arts programs. Students must also assume responsibility for maintaining the school; in addition to caring for his or her room, each student is assigned four or five hours of work per week.

Basics, Cultural Values, Counseling

Gunderson High School in San Jose, Calif., recently added a number of programs under California's School Improvement Program (SIP).

The Gunderson program includes ways for parents, students and staff to help determine the instructional program at the school, a strong counseling program, in-service training programs for teachers and three mini-schools within the 1,500 student school. The School Site Council—composed of four instructors, three parents, three students, a representative of the non-teaching classified staff and the principal—has a central role in shaping school curriculum and administering over $77,000 in SIP funds for such programs as remedial writing and math.

Although only one of 3,300 schools participating in SIP throughout California, State Supt. Wilson Riles has identified the Gunderson program as "one of the best high school programs in the state."

Elementary Schools

The Beasley Academic Center, located in one of the poorest communities in Chicago, was founded on the philosophy that "students must do well." Created through the perseverance and vision of Alice Blair, superintendent of School District 13, the Beasley Academic Center has forged a remarkable record in a short period of time.

In two years the schools' 1,200 students have excelled in reading and math, ranking them third among the some 600 elementary schools in the city and well above the national average.

Parents are required to sign pledges stating they will see the homework is done and be responsible for discipline.

Speaking and writing skills are of utmost importance, according to Blair. Every student must learn at least one poem a week which he or she must recite before the class. "That poem is in good English and the students hear it. When they practice at home, their families hear it," Blair says.

Every class in Blair's district of 13,000 students must teach reading, phonics, listening and writing skills. Every principal reports monthly on each of his/her classes' progress. District 13 test scores show students are gaining each year at about the city-wide average in reading.

Two-thirds of the Beasley faculty were hand picked by the principal. The school now has entrance requirements, including a reading test, yet about 65% of its students come from the district and a large housing project nearby although parents all over the city are trying to send their children to Beasley.

Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School in New Haven, Conn., is an excellent example of how altering the climate of a school can bring about positive social-interaction and achievement gains.

In 1969 King Elementary School students trailed the national average in reading and mathematics by 19 and 18 months, respectively. Attendance was poor, parent-teacher and student-teacher relationships were strained. By 1979, King students were at grade level in language arts and only two months behind in reading and mathematics. There had been no major behavior problems in more than five years. Of the 30 elementary schools in New Haven, King students had been in the top five in attendance and for two years the teachers had the best attendance in the system.

James Comer, professor of psychiatry at the Yale Child Study Center, and a mental health team headed up a concentrated effort to apply principles of the social and behavioral sciences to every aspect of school practice.

The team helped teachers understand and apply child development theory and knowledge in ways that assisted a child in trouble to leave the classroom gracefully, promoted the adjustment of transfer students and taught students in conflict how to negotiate rather than fight, according to Comer. He and his staff also helped teachers, the parent group and the administration work on areas of mutual concern and overcome feelings of distrust.

"All of these interventions reduced distrust, alienation and conflict," Comer says.

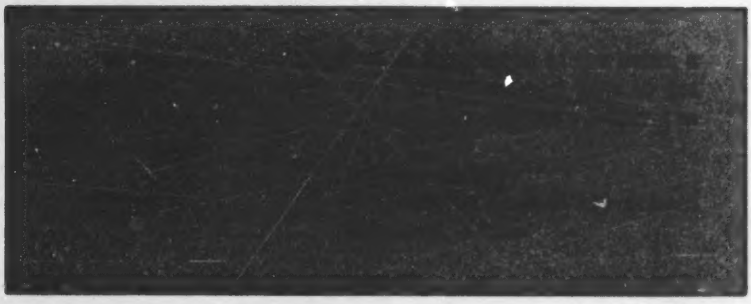
As the climate improved, so did the level of achievement. A variety of academic and social skills approaches were tailored to meet the needs of King students.

While the curriculum devotes full attention to basic academic skills, it also provides units in social skills such as government and politics, banking, nutrition and health. These programs are integrated into the academic and artistic curricula.

"Our program—and many others like it in other cities—clearly shows that inner-city children can learn at significantly higher levels than is common," Comer says. "It is the obligation of each school system to make this possible."

Will Rogers Elementary School in Houston, Texas, with some 600 students, is an excellent example of a school which not only weathered but came out on top of a number of problems, including rapid desegregation and an influx of Hispanic students.

Mattella Grays, who assumed the principalship of the school in 1971, is the figure responsible for holding the school and the community together during the storm.



Grays started a Teacher Development Center to train teachers in how to use team teaching and how to work in "open" classroom situations.

"My top priority was to teach teachers how to be flexible, to use learning centers, to share, to openly disagree and to develop pre-test and post-test learning strategies," Grays says. "Many teachers who were used to self-contained classrooms just needed to have an opportunity to see that it's O.K. to be friendly, to learn how to make decisions together," she adds.

Teachers meet to decide scheduling, library activities, grouping and instructional strategies and a number of other activities.

Mastery learning has become the major teaching technique used in the school, and Gray is "a firm believer in peer tutoring."

The school became overcrowded when it was changed to a magnet school for an enrichment program in 1975. Concerned parents asked for Grays' removal. But as Grays says, "I'm not a quitter."

Grays had already marshalled the extra textbooks and materials required as well as new programs in conversational Spanish, reading, math, music and gymnastics. She also hired additional staff and started a series of mini-courses in drama, guitar, piano and string instruments.

Several years ago the school began an extended day program to involve more students. Now more than 180 students are enrolled in the program and there is a waiting list to get in. Achievement is up—scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills are above the district norms. Grays also started a number of assembly programs and instituted reward and incentive programs for good attendance. The school now boasts a "traveling" drama group, which performs for community groups, and a strong music program. Talented youngsters have been identified through the music and string programs.

Grays says the staff of the school was "strong enough and flexible enough" to make a number of changes in the school. "They are learning what they can do and they are doing it well. They are developing self-confidence and pride," Grays says.

Jack Elementary School in Portland, Maine, is another example of an urban elementary school which is improving school climate and student achievement by "beefing up" the curriculum for diverse needs of students. Jack's 600 students come from both middle and low income families; about 19% are eligible for Title I programs.

To improve vocabulary and writing skills, Principal William Bagley instituted a Latin program for all sixth graders. Each sixth grader receives a minimum of 20 minutes of Latin instruction daily.

Teachers have attended a series of workshops on a method of direct reading instruction developed at the U. of Utah, and are using this approach at all grade levels. New instructional programs include those for gifted fourth-sixth graders as well as specialized programs in art, music and physical education. The school is also taking part in the system-wide string program for third graders.

Bagley says a major goal of the school and a reason for adding the programs is "to enhance the school's image to show the rest of the city what we can do." The faculty has planned a series of musical programs to "open its doors" to the community. Bagley

also says faculty efforts have brought about an overall improvement in school climate within the last few years.

"Aggressive student behavior has dropped by a good 80% due to school-wide enforcement of the discipline policy and use of an in-school suspension room," Bagley says.

Teachers also are planning to implement a reward system to encourage good student attendance.

A Real Maverick

An urban elementary school which is truly a maverick and one in which the instructional program has radically improved student achievement and school climate is the May Elementary School in Chicago.

This inner-city, K-8 school on Chicago's west side implemented mastery learning at every grade level. In one year, mastery learning raised the average reading scores of the school's eighth grade classes more than a grade and a half.

Several years ago, Michael Katims, a former graduate student of Benjamin Bloom's, translated Bloom's work into practice by writing a mastery curriculum for the May School. Katims and his associates put the standard reading texts aside and wrote teaching materials based upon specific objectives, sequential skills, practice exercises, instructive tests, mastery tests and corrective activities. Skills covered range from "decoding" to more complex thinking skills such as drawing inferences or understanding symbols.

Katims' mastery units and the instructional program at the May School are serving as a "pilot" for the Chicago Public Schools. The materials are also designed to meet the requirements of Chicago's minimum competency program under which all eighth grade students are expected to master 80% of 273 separate reading skills in order to be promoted to high school.

Katims says his program works because "it provides teachers with more than inservice training. It provides them with the actual tools needed to do the job." Moreover, the program works because it creates a structure which demands efficient use of classroom time and creates opportunities for success, he says.

Chapter 5

Suburban Mavericks

Effective suburban schools include many types—vocational, comprehensive, highly academic, model and experimental schools. Like other effective schools, these are shaped by strong leadership and a curriculum designed for the students they serve.

Vocational-Comprehensive High Schools

T.C. Williams Senior High School in Alexandria, Va., is a comprehensive suburban high school with particularly strong vocational and academic programs.

Of its more than 2,600 students, 950 are enrolled in vocational or work-study programs. About 60% of the school's graduates go to two- or four-year colleges and eight to 10 students qualify as National Merit Scholarship semi-finalists every year. About 38% of its students are black and a large percentage are foreign-born.

Principal Robert Hanley credits the school's work-study program as one of the major factors in "turning students around" and keeping them in school. Another plus is the proximity of the school to Washington. Some 90% of the students enrolled in the Comprehensive Office Education program get jobs with the federal government.

About 700 students are involved in work-study programs which, in addition to Comprehensive Office Education, include Industrial Corporate Training and Distributive Education. Another 250 students are enrolled in vocational programs.

Work-study is a three year program designed to enable students to work or apprentice in government or local industry. Students in vocational programs may also serve apprenticeships and join trade unions.

In addition to job skills, both work-study and vocational programs emphasize "employment skills"—the vocabulary of the job, how to prepare for interviews and interpersonal relations. Students

"The school works because there is an identification with the place by everyone. Teachers want to be here. Students feel a sense of responsibility; they feel a sense of pride."

Robert Hanley
T.C. Williams High School
Alexandria, Va.

in the Distributive Education program, for example, study retailing and merchandising, but they also learn how to deal with the public and how to handle problems with "the boss" or other employees through role playing activities.

Hanley also says the vocational program is highly effective because students have a direct stake in maintaining the school. Students repair school vehicles, prepare meals for banquets and other school functions, print materials and programs for school events and build sets for drama productions. Students also work on crews to repair building masonry and service air conditioning and heating systems.

"The school works because there is an identification with the place by everyone," Hanley says. "Teachers want to be here. Students feel a sense of responsibility; they feel a sense of pride."

Despite court-ordered busing, a relatively "transient" population and a high percentage of low-income students, the number of students transferring to T.C. Williams from private schools is growing each year. More T.C. Williams students take Advance Placement exams than any school on the East Coast and students score higher than any school in the South with the exception of one boys' school, according to Hanley. Scores on the College Boards are also going up.

"There is a good mix of academic and vocational programs at the school," Hanley says, "and we have tremendous community and business support."

Math and business students, for example, program and tabulate survey results for the city on the school's computer. A number of business-school partnerships exist through the work-study and vocational programs.

Falmouth High School located in a suburb of Portland, Maine, is another example of a comprehensive high school with a strong vocational progam. About 700 seventh through 12th grade students attend the school. While about 70% of its graduates go on to four-year colleges, Principal Ted Sharp says up until a few years ago the school did not have a viable non-college curriculum.

The program for the non-college bound was simply a "watered-down version of the academic curriculum," Sharp says. "Both students and staff were frustrated because it really didn't meet their needs."

Each department designed courses in math, English and social studies specifically for vocational students. Sharp also designed a program whereby students attend a neighboring vocational high school three periods per day. The curricular overhaul could account for the school's low dropout and truancy rates—the lowest in the state.

"We have broadened the scope of the curriculum in a number of ways," Sharp says. An advocate of inservice training for teachers, Sharp secured an Affective Teaching Grant to help teachers learn good affective teaching techniques. The project has greatly improved school climate, but one suspects Sharp—who has been known to practice a few affective techniques himself, like sending teachers flowers—has had a hand in this as well. Unlike many schools, SAT and College Board scores have improved at Falmouth over the last 10 years and are above national norms.

Sharp attributes the success of the school to a number of factors, including a dedicated faculty and a highly stable community. About 80% of the students who start Falmouth in the seventh grade also graduate from the school. "Our faculty is the finest I've seen in a public high school," Sharp says. "Seventy-five percent of the faculty stay several hours after school, and it's paying real dividends for students."

Sharp says that while the school does not have a formal parent group, he organizes four to six parent forums per year on critical school issues and tries to keep informal lines of communication open. He also says he thinks the school has "weathered the times" because Falmouth did not undertake "the massive curriculum changes many schools did in the '60s and '70s but kept pretty much to core courses."

Academic High Schools

A recent *Washington Post* article stated that "a relative handful of secondary schools continue to serve as the funnel to the nation's most selective private colleges and universities."

Yale's admissions director, Worth Davis, is quoted as saying most of the public high schools that consistently supply students are in "managerial, professional communities where the parents tend to demand advanced work."

Schools with coast-to-coast reputations include New Trier in Winnetka, Ill.; Beverly Hills, near Los Angeles; Walt Whitman in Bethesda, Md.; Shawnee Mission near Kansas City and Shaker Heights near Cleveland. Students at these schools are from families *The Wall Street Journal* has called America's "New Class"—the upwardly mobile and affluent.

Yet schools where roughly 93% of their graduates attend college (New Trier) and nearly one out of 10 seniors is a National Merit Scholarship semifinalist (Los Alamos High, N.M.) do have problems which dispel the notion of guaranteed success.

Dan Morgan, a *Washington Post* reporter, wrote about several of these schools. Despite obvious advantages, some students at highly academic schools are faced with severe parental pressure to get good grades and high test scores, he observed. Moreover, frequently there is concern that "average" students are somehow shortchanged. In his account of Los Alamos High, Morgan also notes that some students have a "flat vision of the future," based apparently upon their belief that although many of them will eventually complete PhDs, only a few will be able to do really significant work.

Marilyn Olander, New Trier East's director of instructional services, says "some people in this community are so upwardly mobile that there's nowhere left for them to go." And most of these schools aren't without their share of drug problems and parents who are more interested in their work than their children.

New Trier counselor Tim Wolf, for example, said:

> Eighty to 90% of the kids here are good, healthy, red-blooded Americans. They're achievers in a very achieving community. But they are neglected kids, too. It comes through when I ask a kid 'what does your dad do?' and he says he doesn't know. Or when I ask when he and his dad get together and he replies that he just doesn't see him that much . . . so if you would ask me what kinds of problems I primarily deal with I would say depression and anger.

It is also true that like other schools, those for America's "new class" are subject to inflationary pressures. New Trier teachers, for example, walked off the job in the fall of 1980, saying the school board had proposed an offer which would have cut benefits of veteran teachers and resulted in "second-class education" at New Trier.

Beverly Hills High School in California, which has the most extensive Advance Placement offerings and one of the best science and math programs in the country, is feeling the impact of Proposition 13.

Since the intent of Prop. 13 is to "equalize" state spending for education, many affluent California districts like Beverly Hills are struggling to maintain existing programs. While the district has a substantial reserve fund, officials say it will be depleted by 1982. Like other schools, Beverly Hills is relying heavily upon a local education foundation and rental income from the city.

While one may find it difficult to imagine "hard times" befalling youngsters amidst the backdrop of Hollywood mansions, sprawling lawns and Rolls Royces, the impact of fiscal constraints is much the same at Beverly Hills High School as it would be anywhere.

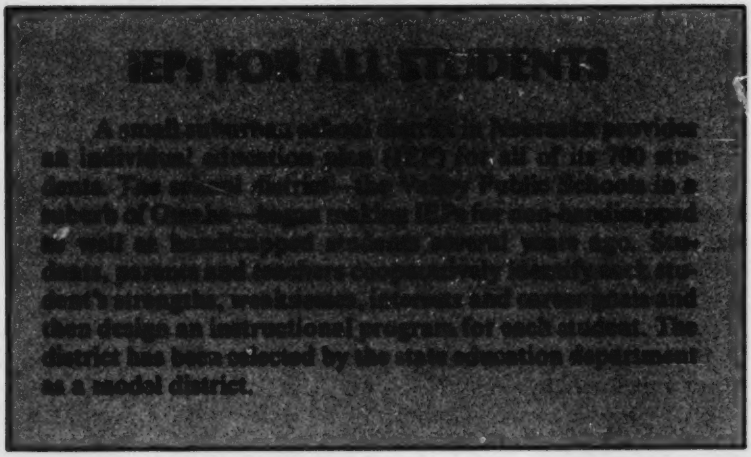
Principal Sol Levine says there has been a gradual increase in class size and that his "major priority is to maintain the quality of the school program. We are hoping Proposition 13 will equalize quality up, not down." He is also concerned about a general decline in SAT scores, which, while still well above the national average, are creeping downward. And Beverly Hills has instituted a number of programs which do much to counter the image of a utopian haven for rich kids.

Among these are institutes in management and law which are open to all students on an elective basis. The institutes offer a series of classes, noontime speakers, projects, field trips and internship experiences. The curriculum is fashioned after a college curriculum, and students have an opportunity to serve internships in business and management.

"These experiences provide students with broad exposures," Levine says. "They provide total involvement in a curriculum area. The institutes are not geared specifically for honor students because the faculty has attempted to design the courses to reach students on all levels."

Beverly Hills High is also undertaking an across-the-board emphasis on writing. Teachers stress writing in a variety of courses in addition to English. Levine says many of the curriculum changes such as the management and law institutes came about as a result of cooperative staff efforts and did not require additional expenditures. The school also instituted a house system to give counselors and assistant principals more direct contact with students. Each of four "houses" is headed by an assistant principal and two counselors who are responsible for 600 students. (Prior to 1977 the school had only three assistant principals for 2,500 students.)

"Because students remain in the same house for four years, assistant principals can have more direct conversations and contact with students and are provided with more opportunities to get to know the entire child,'" Levine says. "While there are no rivalries among houses, we do try to play up achievement."



New Trier East High School is making several major organizational changes due to declining enrollments and dwindling finances. While New Trier is clearly holding its own academically, the combined population of its east and west campuses is expected to dip to 3,000 students by the end of the decade. This compares to a student population of 6,500 several years ago.

As a result, the two schools will be reorganized in a 1-3 structure; freshman will attend the west campus; sophomores, juniors

and seniors will attend New Trier east. While the two campuses will have a common central administrative team, they are three and one-half miles apart.

"The instructional program continues to be our highest priority," according to Principal Ralph McGee. "The department heads have worked on curricular continuity and the administrative team has been scaled down at the freshman campus," he says. Also, the merger will enable New Trier to have a "curricula pool" for such areas as foreign language instruction, he points out, enabling the schools to keep programs like Latin and German.

McGee also says the curricular changes at New Trier have been dynamic. Considerable emphasis has been placed upon writing (a sequential four-year program) and on increased sophistication in evaluating reading levels.

"We have been acutely aware of the need for strong foreign language, science and math programs and have tried to exercise leadership in those areas," McGee says. The 1980 Outstanding Biology Teacher of the Year, for example, was a New Trier teacher. New Trier math teachers frequently write textbooks. Students' scores on the math portion of the SAT generally fall in the 515-525 range. The school is also beginning to build a strong computer science program. The faculty is designing programs for microcomputers and a computer math class is offered to seniors. New Trier has also enhanced its Career Center to increase student awareness of career opportunities.

Middle Schools

Freeport Middle School is located in a predominately "blue collar" community 12 miles outside of Portland, Maine. About 300 sixth-eighth graders attend the school. Five years ago students were angry and violent "because the curriculum was essentially a 'watered down' high school curriculum," according to Principal Wayne Clark.

He has initiated a number of programs specifically designed for middle-schoolers, including a teacher-advisor system for all sixth graders, a week-long wilderness camping experience and a series of mini-courses. Each mini-course is offered for four weeks and all students may select one course from among 15 offerings. Recent courses have included creative writing, biology preview, beginning French, art history, drafting, math lab, play production and history of the West.

Clark says a top priority when he assumed the principalship in 1976 was creating a position for a guidance counselor. He also undertook a three-year revision of the curriculum and initiated a silent reading program to allow both staff and students to read for 45 minutes daily.

Student incentive programs include a curriculum fair where students exhibit projects in math, science, language, arts, music and a number of other areas to win awards; Congrat-A-Grams (simulated telegrams) to recognize achievement, projects or community service; and "I Caught You" slips for observed positive behavior. (The "I Caught You" idea has been expanded to include teachers, aides, secretaries and custodians.)

Recent school projects include a 25-station nature trail behind the school and a student production of *Oliver*.

Management strategies include the development of a community council of 25 parents, which makes recommendations to the School Committee and has been instrumental in getting needed textbooks, supplies, athletic equipment and facilities, according to Clark.

Like other effective principals, Clark makes staff evaluation a priority. Teachers submit and discuss quarterly lesson plans, and the principal estimates he makes 1.5 classroom observations daily.

Clark notes that not only has the school turned into a "positive place," but parents who used to complain about the school are volunteering for service. "We are consciously trying to make the school a better place to come to," Clark says. "We talk about it with students. At the same time we are attempting to increase students' expectations for achievement."

Junior High Schools

Despite mandatory busing which contributed to some 500 students fleeing to private schools, Nobel Junior High School in suburban Los Angeles is making a go of it.

"Parents are still somewhat bitter about the situation," according to Principal Andrew Anderson. Nobel Junior High School is located in an upper-middle-class neighborhood. One-third of its students are selected by "lot" to attend a predominantly Hispanic sister school 10 miles away. An equal number of students from the sister school are sent to the basic education "magnet" at Nobel.

"The children naturally get to know one another on the bus and develop a sense of camaraderie which is difficult to eliminate once the children get to school," Anderson says.

Yet the classes are adjusted to reduce racial isolation and most of the school's 1,650 students are involved in "continuous progress" learning in math, facilitated by the school's computer. Anderson says the faculty is currently working to use continuous progress in English, history and geography.

Students are also learning to program computers. Every year North American Rockwell sponsors a competition for the best computer program. "Students work their heads off on those computer programs," Anderson says. The school also has a math lab equipped with smaller computers.

About 800 students are enrolled in foreign language classes. The language program involves festivals, international nights and competitive events. Native speakers are also brought in to work with students and to teach at language stations.

Anderson, who is also a veteran principal of inner city schools, says "Schools must have the help of the industrial community. Most large companies hold monthly meetings to determine what they can do within the community. Help can be found to set up reading and math labs, locate volunteers, establish internships and begin a number of cooperative projects."

Anderson also says the faculty must be willing to make changes, "to flex according to student needs."

Elementary Schools

"A disaster area. No pride. Out of control."

Jim Howard, currently superintendent in Kearney, Neb., used these words to describe the situation when he became principal of the Bloomer School in 1974.

Four years later the school boasted a full band, assembly programs, dances, well-maintained grounds and no broken windows. It wasn't entirely magic, either. Howard says he made it clear that if he was going to take the job, there would have to be some changes made. "It is a good way to determine if the central office really wants you," Howard says.

Bloomer School in Council Bluffs, Iowa is a K-9 "small city" school "across the bridge" from Omaha, Neb.

"The first thing we did was haul about 18 loads of junk out of the building," Howard says, and students and staff painted the entire building. "Pride became a real factor at the school. Students reseeded the lawn. The shop class built benches, and soon we were under way," Howard says.

Howard brought back study halls, "beefed up" and enforced discipline policies and used in-school suspension rooms. He also hired a curriculum consultant and rearranged programs. He set up a special "Phoenix" program for "incorrigible" fourth-ninth graders which had a 98% success rate. Howard established a theme for each school year and built up the athletic program. He also created new heroes—students who won speech contests or served on the safety patrol.

"Teachers knew we were backing them and kids knew we were backing them. Little by little the tide began to turn," Howard says.

Hidden Valley Elementary School in Concord, Calif., is a K-6 school which made significant achievement gains during the mid- and late '70s. Joan Thisius, currently a Title IV-C project disseminator and principal of the school from 1975-78, says, "my major priorities were curriculum and school climate."

Thisius and the school staff designed a cohesive K-6 curriculum and received a three-year Title IV-C grant to improve school climate.

"We surveyed 20 critical climate factors which helped us to determine what to tackle," Thisius says. For example, while teachers had devoted considerable time to articulating goals and objectives, many parents who were surveyed did not know what they were, according to Thisius. "We found that seemingly simple things like communicating clearly with parents can make a tremendous difference in school climate. We also wanted parents to have meaningful involvement in the school—through the Site Council and other means."

Many of the improvements did not require money, simply a change in outlook and a willingness to involve parents and the community in the total school program, according to Thisius.

Model Schools

Located in Amherst, N.H., the Amherst Middle School is a modern facility specifically designed to meet the needs of middle school youngsters. Situated on 76 acres of land, the school really contains several "schools." It is a model school, which, according to Principal Paul Collins, was designed to allow fifth and sixth graders to use gross motor skills through activities like shop, sports and movement.

Through an interdisciplinary project called Project Survive, students also built their own greenhouse and sugar shack to make maple syrup. In addition to planting, harvesting and selling their crops, students plant balsam firs to sell as Christmas trees.

Each year students start seeds in science classes and keep them in the greenhouse until it is time to plant. Following harvest, students in home economics learn how to can and preserve. In math classes students compute costs and discover cost effective means of producing food.

The school building itself was designed for team teaching. Each team of four teachers—one from social studies, science, math and language arts—teaches approximately 100 students. A thematic approach is used by each team. Recent themes have included advertising, consumer education, energy, oceanography and environmental concerns. Sixth graders also attend a week-long environmental camp.

Amherst's test scores are high—95% of students are working at ability or above. Collins attributes the success of the school to the inservice education staff received, curriculum review and school climate. Staff reviewed the curriculum in light of teaching and learning styles and the unique characteristics and learning styles of pre-adolescents. Collins feels an important aspect of school climate is the staff's ability to relate to the principal's style of leadership, their ability "to identify with the direction the school is moving in."

Moreover, parents must agree with this direction, according to Collins. He says that prior to the construction of the school he visited homes in the community to explain the program and tell parents how it was going to work. Through a federal project called Project Adolescent, Amherst Middle School and other schools in the area have parent information nights on topics ranging from age and learning characteristics to using TV as an instructional tool. Collins feels the understanding of pre-adolescent students and the

nurturing of their positive self-concept are crucial undertakings for both educators and parents of middle school youngsters.

Collins says future projects include an advisee/advisor program for fifth graders and more learning activities in music and the arts.

Experimental Schools

Experimental schools are somewhat scarce these days. New ones, that is. But experimental schools which survived both the 60s and 70s are a rare breed indeed.

One such school, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Laboratory School in Evanston, Ill., was founded in 1967. A liaison relationship was established with Northwestern U. for cooperation in initiating educational experiments. Student teachers also intern at the school.

In 1976 the school board also established an experimental middle school, and in 1978 the two schools became "one school under two roofs." The merger enables staff to group students according to needs rather than by age.

For example, some fifth-grade students are at the middle school and some are at King Lab. The King Lab Experimental School is considered the North Campus and the Skiles Experimental Middle School is the South Campus. Staff from each school are shaping a continuous progress curriculum.

The two schools are administered by the same persons and are closely aligned through similar philosophies of child development, organizational pattern and curriculum approach. There is one K-8 principal, one K-8 curriculum implementer, an associate principal and an assistant principal.

Both schools use team-teaching and multi-age groupings. In the elementary school, for example, teams include students five, six and seven years old; six, seven and eight years old; and eight, nine and ten years old.

The 630 children in the King Lab School are divided into six teams of approximately 100 students. Each team has four teachers and one teacher helper. Teams from language arts, science, social studies and math meet to discuss and plan units of study. The school also has a fine arts team of full-time drama, art, music, physical

education and dance teachers who plan units in cooperation with curriculum area teachers. For example, one team studied astronomy and the fine arts team coordinated their program with the astronomy unit. The team culminated the unit with a multimedia presentation involving dance, drama and music. Gymnastics was used to illustrate the constellations in motion.

A variety of innovative ideas are carried out at the King Lab School, including mini-labs in each major subject area, scheduled two or three times per week. Children select the mini-lab they wish. The school has an extensive resource center which students may visit anytime during the school day. Children may also borrow both print and non-print materials including audio-visual equipment.

A paperback bookstore was built in the custodian's storage closet on the first floor. Run by students and the PTA, the Book Nook is open three hours every day and supervised by parents. Selections are based on good children's literature and there are adult books children may buy as presents. Children may also purchase secondhand paperbacks from the "Bargain Basin," alias the "Swap Sink" (formerly, the custodian's sink).

Books are selected with the assistance of the language arts team. To keep children involved in the store's contents, two "Deals on Wheels" (wagons toting books) are pulled through the halls so children may browse. The "Deals on Wheels" tend to encourage children to visit the Book Nook.

A number of controlled experiments have taken place at both schools. These include studies of mainstreaming, evaluation methods, the use of foreign language in the teaching of social studies and the effects of instruction in test-taking techniques on student performance on standardized achievement tests.

Principal Corinne Schumacher reports that a 1977-78 study of mainstreaming, for example, showed the practice did not have an adverse effect on achievement nor did students rate special education students differently than their own classmates. Of the 20 students who participated in the program, 15 continued in similar classes the following year.

A report card study showed parental satisfaction with parent conferences as compared to written reports. "A parent education meeting was held with staff and parents regarding this subject, and again the sentiment was the same," Schumacher says. "Our staff has a strong feeling about the superior worth of conferences as compared to written reports."

Consequently, the school reports student progress to parents by means of three conferences and one written report per year in contrast with the district practice of two conferences and two written reports.

A Boost from Languages

Through a cooperative effort between the Spanish and French teachers at Skiles, the fifth graders at King Lab were given instruction in French and Spanish as they studied the similarities and differences among these cultures. The staff hypothesized that as a result of bringing the language into the study of the culture, the students would come to understand and appreciate the aspirations of all people and would respect themselves and others to a greater extent.

The findings suggest some significant changes in the attitudes of Lab School fifth graders did take place as a result of this experiment. More of the students felt other students liked them and their ideas; more of the students rejected the notions that "all people in some countries are cruel" and "you can tell how smart a person is by the culture from which he/she comes." And a greater number of Lab School students shifted from negative or uncertain positions to positive attitudes about the effects of being with students of other races and cultures on learning.

Results of an experiment which placed fifth-grade students in the middle school showed 83% of the students preferred being in the middle school as opposed to the Lab School. All of the parents favored the move.

Outcomes of an experiment in teaching test-taking techniques to students showed the experimental group had higher test scores than the control group on both the 1979 MAT and the 1978 MAT. An analysis of variance showed the experimental group made significant gains in reading. Minority students in the experimental group also made higher math concept scores.

"Since 75% of our time was devoted to reading comprehension skills, we predicted that we would most likely see a gain in this area," Schumacher says, "and our prediction was confirmed." Moreover, the increased emphasis on reading comprehension may have helped minority students tackle math "word" problems.

In keeping with placing students by skill level rather than age, students at Skiles are also allowed to take courses at the high school if they qualify. Seventh and eighth graders who pass a pre-

algebra test are eligible to take algebra. All fifth through eighth grade students can take foreign language study. In seventh grade all children must take a foreign language, but in the eighth grade they may opt to continue or not.

Additional projects at both schools cover a wide range of activities. The Lab School established a corporation and sold stock. The effort resembles a student union or business center. Proceeds from the sale of shares, listed for as little as 25 cents per share, are used to improve the business center with flower boxes, bird-feeders and plants.

Other projects have included a study of the effects of print and broadcast media on readers and viewers. Students published a newspaper, studied the effects of advertising and conducted surveys of TV viewing habits and violence on TV as a part of the unit. Students have also made on-the-job visits to study careers and have opened and operated a restaurant.

Chapter 6

Rural Mavericks

> I went to the Appalachian Mountains to teach because it was in those mountains that I had spent some of my happiest days as a child. There was no great mystery surrounding that choice, and no sense of selfless mission or self-denial. I had been happy there. That's all.
>
> Eliot Wigginton, English teacher
> Rabun County High School, Ga.

Approximately one student in five attends school in the countryside or in areas with fewer than 2,500 residents.

Schooling in a wealthy farming community, a mountainous village or a coastal community might appear to be the ideal situation, yet as Gail Parks of the National Rural Center and others have pointed out, the incidence of poverty among rural students is greater than among any other student population. Also, the degree of poverty tends to be more severe.

"Forty percent of all U.S. poverty exists in rural places, and almost 20% of our nation's rural children are poor," Parks says.

Furthermore, isolation resulting from difficult terrain and distance also creates unique educational problems in rural schools, Parks notes.

A study by Terrence Deal and Samuel Nutt for the National Institute of Education also points to the difficulties rural schools face in funding, attracting personnel and developing programs:

- Residents of rural schools are less willing or less able to pay for school services than are urban residents.
- Rural school systems consistently maintain fewer personnel supporting instruction than do their central city or suburban counterparts.

- Rural school systems provide fewer pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, special education programs and library services than urban school systems.

Moreover, federal programs designed to assist rural schools frequently run into difficulties. As Robert Herriott of Abt. Associates Inc. writes in a report concerning a six-year federally funded program aimed at 10 small rural districts, the project

> . . . was largely ineffective because of its inability to function successfully . . . in a manner sympathetic with the cultural norms of the 10 rural school districts it was attempting to help. Local planned documents were rejected by federal officials and revised by local personnel until they were unreadable (and unusable) at the local level . . .; local staffing assignments were rejected at the federal level on the grounds that the individuals proposed were incompetent to carry out their intended responsibilities . . .; funds budgeted at the local level for a week-long, in-service workshop were held up for months at the federal level on the grounds that the goals for the workshops had been inadequately spelled out.

It appears most educators and government officials have come to recognize city "solutions" do not always apply to rural situations. Rural communities may reflect "acculturation," "transition" or "resistance" to urban or suburban lifestyles, values and models of education. In any case, most educators agree rural schools are unique, varied and highly "visable" in the communities they serve. Often the rural school is the center of community interest, politics, social gatherings and culture.

Research concerning rural schools is limited. Usually it has been conducted to monitor "reform" efforts and progress toward suburban or urban models of education. This is not to imply that all such efforts have been ineffectual. In fact, projects such as the Rural School Improvement Program and the Alaska Rural School Project in the 1960s did encourage practices which clearly worked in small schools. Yet frequently the practices disappeared with the loss of project support systems and increased pressure to adopt urban "models" of education.

Drawing on Strengths

More recently, however, research has focused on the unique strengths of small schools which distinguish them from urban schools.

As Barker and Gump note in *Big School, Small School*, for example, small schools have unique advantages over large schools. The proportion of students who participate in performances, competitive events, student government and non-academic courses is greater than in larger schools. Moreover, the small school is an integral part of the community and frequently enjoys strong community support.

Recent studies, while limited, appear to imply that perhaps the best way to accomplish rural school improvement is to enhance the inherent strengths of rural schools rather than attempt to force them to fit outside structures.

In a recent study of rural education by the Education Commission of the States (1979), for example, Paul Nachtigal and others examined both government- and foundation-supported projects and local efforts to improve rural schools. Nachtigal says that an improvement strategy for rural schools must first look at the nature of the rural community social structure.

"Assessing the community's social dynamics is as critical as assessing children's educational needs in deciding how best to improve rural education," Nachtigal says.

The study found the intervention strategies which met with the greatest success tended to be grassroots efforts. Among them, the lobbying efforts of People United for Rural Education (PURE), a local effort to resist consolidation which later gained statewide support, and the efforts of school people to secure funding, accreditation and a well-defined K-12 curriculum in Elk River, Idaho.

The report also describes how the superintendent and community leaders in Staples, Minn., built a strong school system linked to community development and essentially saved a railroad town from extinction. Officials built a vocational-technical institute to provide training in other occupations to railroad workers who had been laid off and to attract business to the area. More jobs were created for town improvements and to revive fallow farmland through irrigation. School officials began to seek and were awarded a number of grants for programs in the elementary and secondary schools and to provide city services.

THE STAPLES PARTNERSHIP

As Tom Gjelten notes in his description of Staples for the report, "the central premise of the [Staples'] strategy is that the traditional closeness between school and community in a small rural town is the element that is essential to the town's survival and the one which most needs to be preserved." Gjelten credits school people, and particularly Supt. Duane Lund, with making education a highly professional undertaking "where working in a small-town system is a unique professional challenge in its own right. [In Staples] any educational leader has not only the opportunity to advance along the narrow path of his profession; he also has the responsibility of managing the partnership of school and community development efforts."

In his concluding chapters for the report, Nachtigal emphasizes that unlike urban areas where community acceptance of educational innovations is more likely to be treated as a separate issue, school issues **are** community issues in rural areas.

It is for this reason, then, that while effective rural schools have all of the characteristics of effective schools anywhere, they also must have an extremely high level of community support.

It is also true that the community demonstrates this support by securing the economic and political structures necessary for a good educational program. In this regard, Duane Lund's advice is particularly revealing. He says it is not the nature of the funding—be it federal, state or private—but "the flexibility and the opportunities for professional development made possible by grant money which makes [seeking outside money] so worthwhile, not the funded programs themselves . . . ."

He advises administrators that "the important thing is get the dollars—so you can do something. It's not to have change for change's sake. But it takes some money to give your staff a chance to sit back and think about what they are doing and where they want to go."

While local support and enterprising school people are important anywhere, they are crucial in rural settings.

It should not be inferred, however, that only locally initiated efforts succeed. The National Diffusion Network (NDN) has reportedly led to substantial change in classroom practices and teachers' expertise in rural Maine. The Ford Foundation's Leadership Development Program has also apparently met its broad goal of strengthening rural leadership. However, community awareness, use and support for these "outside" resources is clearly dependent upon the willingness of local school people to seek and advocate such projects.

The Rural Poor

Perhaps no school warrants the title of rural maverick more than the Rabun County High School in Georgia.

Eliot Wigginton was the force behind the rich Foxfire curricula which not only transformed the school but the educational experiences of students in some 150 other rural communities which have adopted the Foxfire model.

Wigginton wanted to put life into the curriculum, break the endless drudgery of lectures and deadly texts. He began to meet with students after school to learn about their lives. He talked with their parents and grandparents about their traditions and way of life. He discovered not only how self-sufficient these people were but that their traditions and "survival" skills might well be forgotten unless they were recorded. This sparked the idea for the *Foxfire* magazine and became the language arts curriculum. The magazine serves not only to record tradition but as a vehicle for teaching interviewing techniques, writing, editing and communication skills.

What began as a magazine grew into a series of books published by Doubleday. Students now run every phase of the business from keeping records to paying staff members their monthly wages. Moreover, Wigginton's students have since expanded their efforts to include television shows for their community cable-TV station, a series of record albums of traditional music and a series of investigations into the environmental and political affairs of the

community. Wigginton is committed to using the community as the curriculum. "The community itself is the most important vehicle of learning that any school can have," he says.

He also views total immersion in the community as the only realistic way to expect students to get involved in community affairs as adults. He does not view this process as a substitute for academic rigor but rather as a means for students to internalize and test ideas. It is, for him, a process which enables students to use their skills within the world and develop a view of learning as an independent and lifelong activity.

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

In an article for *PTA Today*, Wigginton says that following a dismal first-year at the school in 1965, he decided to create a curriculum based upon positive learning experiences similar to those he could recall from his own years in school.

> **Those experiences I had carried with me and still celebrated, for they had changed my perspective of the world around me and of my own worth and ability .... visitors from the community, visits into the community, times when we were trusted with responsibility—and moments when things we were allowed to create or do were given an audience *beyond* our classroom teacher.**

Further, it provides young adults with proof that they are doing something that is useful in the **real** world and answers a question adolescents frequently ask: "What are we doing this for?"

The school also has displays of student photography and frequent drama productions. Rabun County has a number of programs whereby high school students can direct and teach projects at the elementary school level. A recent construction project involved the relocation and reconstruction of 25 historic log buildings. Currently the school is working on plans for a small factory to manufacture reproductions of Appalachian furniture.

Small High Schools

Condon Administrative District #25 is located in the heart of the wheat country in eastern Oregon. Fermen Warnock, currently superintendent of Gillian ESD, was a superintendent and principal in the district for 26 years. Warnock's colleagues recognize him as an educational leader who rallied strong community support.

Warnock says he had the support of the community because he wanted the school to be in constant use and because he is an advocate of adult education programs. These efforts paid off because the budget committee tended to support them. "Schools have to provide what citizens want," Warnock says, "and they'll approve the taxes to do it." Two-thirds of the district revenues come from local taxes.

The district started a vocational agriculture program and was one of the first rural schools in the area to have a kindergarten.

Michael Keown, principal of Condon High School, says support from citizens comes in a number of other ways, too. Parents are active on the school board, the PTA and booster clubs. Keown believes teachers set the mood for school spirit, respect for the school and a working atmosphere. He also says good custodial and support staff are crucial. Small schools are able to provide more individualized programs for students, according to Keown. "Curriculum must be designed with student and teacher interests in mind."

Career education and work study are very much a part of Condon's curriculum. The school also has an outstanding advisor-advisee system. About 75% of its graduates go to college.

Keown says the advantages of small schools far outweigh their disadvantges. "The closeness to students and parents in small schools makes everyone accessible. It is possible to know all of your students and what their plans are in a small school," Keown says. "And more students participate in extra-curricular activities."

Another exemplary small school district is the Marcola School District in western Oregon. Lucille Dickey is superintendent, high school principal and a substitute teacher in the 360-pupil district.

Dickey says she substitutes for teachers 30 days out of each school year because she "likes to keep active in the classroom—to keep up with curriculum." She feels small schools have their advantages, but they also have their disadvantages in that students are

frequently exposed to only one teacher in each subject area, particularly in specialized programs like business education. Yet, she says, the rapport staff in small schools can develop with the community is hard to beat.

Expanding the Curriculum

Another high school with strong community backing is Mountain Lake High School in Minnesota. Dennis Litfin, the school's principal, says a number of volunteers from the predominately Mennonite community run extra-curricular activities after school. Ninety percent of the 340 students participate in activities ranging from choir to football. The school also provides late buses to encourage participation.

The curriculum has recently undergone a number of changes since Mountain Lake adopted the quarter system. Under this structure, the school is able to offer more electives in such areas as local history, agri-business and dairy production. Students also work on farms or in town in various occupations related to agriculture. Ten local businesses also offer students opportunities for training in office occupations. About 80% of Mountain Lake High graduates continue their education beyond high school.

The school has several unique programs including individual study, an advisor-advisee system and adult education within the regular school program. High school classes are open to adults in the community. Elective courses include such topics as American politics, North American Indians and environmental problems. The lake in town provides an excellent "learning laboratory" for environmental study. And unlike many schools across the country, achievement scores are up at Mountain Lake High School.

A small rural high school with an outstanding resource center and cooperative ventures with neighboring schools is the Danube High School in Danube, Minn.

"Cooperation is a necessity," according to Principal March Thorstad. The 184-pupil school shares vocational and agriculture programs with three other schools. Danube students also share chemistry and physical education teachers.

The school's federally funded resource center is well-equipped, flexible and enables highly individualized instruction. The school also has computer programming classes. Like Mountain Lake, Danube High School has changed to a quarter system. Thorstad says that although the school has a new athletic complex, it is not

in debt because the community "tries to have the money before it spends it." Thorstad also reports he has not had to cut back any programs.

Thorstad says the school is working "due to the opportunities available with surrounding schools, programs geared to the needs of both teachers and students and a genuine closeness in teacher-student relationships." Thorstad also says parents are involved in the school and active in parent advisory groups.

The Colville Model

That exemplary "rural" schools are not necessarily limited to farming communities, is illustrated by two schools—one in a logging community in Washington, the other in a fishing village in Alaska.

Colville High School is located in the northeast corner of Washington state near the Canadian border. Logging and related industries are the major businesses in the area. Juniors and seniors at the 660-pupil high school may participate in vocational or community experiences with local employees if approved by a faculty committee. Students may also opt to take courses at the local community college under a dual credit arrangement. About 25% to 35% of Colville graduates attend two- or four-year colleges.

Principal Jim Monasmith says the school climate has changed dramatically over the last 10 years due to a conscious effort to recruit and hire top-notch people. A committee of students and staff interview potential teachers. Monasmith says the district has never failed to hire the teachers recommended by the committee.

Monasmith places considerable emphasis on this process because he believes teachers must not only be well prepared academically, they must like kids. Moreover, recruiting good people means they will build good programs, according to Monasmith. He cites examples of a language teacher at the school who teaches four foreign languages and the chorus director who built a 250-member chorus "from what was essentially a quartet." Band, once of interest to only seven students, now involves over 100.

Getting good people may require getting rid of some deadwood, Monasmith says. (He suggested to the former music director that he might be better off in a trade he enjoyed.)

Monasmith urges school people to place more emphasis upon initial recruitment and staff attitudes than upon curriculum. Monasmith feels if the staff is committed, a good program will

follow. Staff at Colville have developed "internal" competency tests. All students must score 80% or better on competency tests in grammar, writing, and basic, applied and vocational mathematics to graduate. Teachers have also developed their own gifted program and an in-school GED program. Teachers all have Individual Growth Plans for professional development.

Monasmith also places a premium on student involvement. Students not only interview prospective teachers, they also serve on committees such as the Student Body Budget Committee, the Assembly Committee and a School Improvement Committee. Students also pick their own advisors (who may, incidently, include support staff), and athletes evaluate coaches.

Another interesting twist—the bus driver evaluates the behavior of athletes traveling to games away from home.

Monasmith also has several pointers for administrators who want to improve school climate:

- Start with staff and use a formal instrument to measure school climate.
- Don't expect change overnight since improvement will take three to five years to accomplish.
- Don't expect staff to initiate ideas immediately. Many are conditioned to waiting for the principal to come up with all the new ideas.

Monasmith has consciously worked at improving school climate since he assumed the principalship in 1970. This included enforcement of discipline policy and communicating with parents. As a result of enforcement of rules, discipline cases have dropped from over 300 in 1970 to roughly 60 in 1980. Efforts to communicate with parents include a weekly column in the local newspaper about positive things happening to students at the school, community projects and other student activities. The paper also prints disciplinary cases by grade level and the action taken by the school.

"The community has a right to know what we're doing in the schools," Monasmith says. Also, the school has decided to try a new program involving "modeling behavior." To develop a sense of

responsibility and good work habits, all teachers will emphasize traits needed to run a successful business such as punctuality, accuracy and proper care of equipment.

Monasmith says some 90% of the new ideas at the school come from staff or students.

A rural high school with three different approaches to vocational education and a good academic program can be found in Petersburg, Alaska. Built in the early 1900s, this public high school in a fishing village on Metcalf Island has undergone a number of improvements to the physical plant and the curriculum.

Vocational programs include on-the-job training in the fish processing industry or local businesses, special training through a state and regional resource center in such fields as forestry and engineering and an aqua program which includes working to enhance salmon runs.

Two-thirds of the students who graduate from Petersburg High School stay in the community. As Principal Sid Wright says, "the school is the community center." Graduates from the school frequently return to perform in productions and musical programs put on by the community.

For a school of only 220 students, the courses are varied. They include advanced placement offerings as well as courses in Alaskan history and geography; writers of the North, like Jack London; mythology and folklore (including study of the Thlinget Indians); journalism; theatre; aqua culture; surveying; electronics; chain saw and diesel engine operation and maintenance; journalism and photography. "Our school attempts to maintain a balance between music, art and sports," Wright says.

Wright also says 95% of the students will have been in a play before they graduate and 50% will have performed in a full Shakesperian production. Sixty to 70% of all students participate in band or chorus for at least one year.

The school also has a salt water aquarium, well stocked with local sea life. A student recently won a $5,000 grant for his development of a Pelton Wheel which generates electricity from a nearby waterfall. The grant money will be used in a project to generate electricity for a house in the community. While all travel must be done by plane or ferry, Wright finds staff morale is good. Teacher-turnover is low and job applications from the "lower 48" are plentiful.

Parent Power in Latimer

CAL Community School in Latimer, Iowa, is not only a strong local school but an exemplary school fighting (and winning) a battle against consolidation with state officials. Supt. James Jess is also the national advisor of Parents United for Rural Education (PURE). Winner of the 1978 National Volunteer Activist Award, PURE volunteers are committed to local control of public education. Parent volunteers who work in the school are frequently CAL graduates who return to the community after graduation from college. Lee Wise, the elementary school principal, says one of the reasons he took the job was the strong community support for the school. Teachers say they usually have 100% attendance at parent-teacher conferences.

Concrete evidence of community support abounds—a new sound system for the choir and a fine arts awards program. Perhaps the most visible evidence of support can often be found on the steps of the state capitol where parents have assembled en masse to support or oppose various legislation. (They recently lobbied for a bill to tax themselves to raise additional money for the district and opposed a bill calling for consolidation.)

Jess builds on the community's desire to maintain a good school through surveys, a school newsletter addressed to the community and parent involvement on committees and boards. The high school program includes about 70 different courses including mass media, secondary reading, computer programming and music theory. Mini-courses and independent study are available to students if a course is not scheduled. A full-time, multi-categorical resource program is available to students needing special education assistance.

The school also participates in an area-wide computer network system for computer-assisted instruction. An artists-in-the-schools program brings professional artists into the school for one day to a week. A cooperative foreign language program is in effect with four other small schools in the area.

Class sizes are small. CAL offers preschool and adult education programs. The school anticipates being a site for programs for senior citizens. A rather unique program at the school is Project CARE (CAL Academic Resource Enrichment), a program for academically talented students in grades 5-8. Plans are to expand the effort to all grades. Funded totally by the district, the project

enables students to meet with a resource instructor for three, 45-minute periods out of a six-day cycle. Independent study and mini-courses are set up to help students explore topics in depth. Students do not receive grades.

Two basic principles seem to shape the CAL program—a belief in the personal approach and keeping lines of communication open. Both children and adults are interested in maintaining a quality education program.

Rural Elementary Schools

"If I had a desk job, you might as well take me out and shoot me," says Kate Dennis, teacher-principal of Howell Elementary School in Howell, Utah.

Dennis—Utah's 1979 Teacher of the Year—teaches about 53 K-6 students in her "two room schoolhouse" located in the northwest corner of Utah.

She has been with the district for 15 years and asked to be sent to Howell eight years ago. Because she believes children can learn to accept responsibility and make decisions, the school has several special features. Children work on individual learning contracts and frequently teach others. The building itself reflects Dennis' philosophy that children must learn to make their own decisions. In the center of the main room is a kive or "magic circle" similar to those Indians made to serve as places to talk and work out disagreements. The school also has media, ceramics, leather and stage "areas." Dennis' office is in a separate glassed-in area of the room.

"Volunteering" and "responsibility" are the key words at Howell. Dennis says the students work together, with older students helping younger ones. (Dennis does, however, have one "half-day" teacher and several teacher aides.) She also says parents have been very active and have raised hundreds of dollars for the school. The state designated Howell a model school, and recently it was the second school in Utah to be accredited. Howell students won the President's Physical Fitness Award for three consecutive years. Astronauts from the Phiokol Space Corporation nearby visit students periodically.

Dennis says the school is like a family where everybody counts. "I am always at the door to greet and hug students," Dennis says, "Affection and enthusiasm are contagious. We pull

together here." She believes the administrator is the leader of the school who sets the general tone. She feels it is important to build up student ego and morale. However, this begins with oneself: "If you think you're special and can make children think you're special then you probably are special."

Moreover, Dennis has set up a number of special days at the school. "Five or six minutes of celebration can make a difference in the whole week," Dennis says. Yet she also believes school is a place for study, learning, maturity and self control. Dennis likes the degree of individualization possible in small schools, but is worried about "isolation" now that tight funds have caused the district to curtail field trips.

K-12 Rural Schools

Located in the southwestern part of the state, Verdi School may be one of the smallest K-12 schools in Minnesota. The school has 125 students, 59 of whom are enrolled in the high school. Verdi is one of five schools in a cooperative center. All juniors and seniors attend the center in the afternoons. Programs at the center include land transportation, agriculture, child care and construction. "Even if students complete college, it is good to have something to fall back on," says Principal Harmon Stanch.

Small does not necessarily mean the school lacks programs or extra-curricular activities. Students take correspondence courses in language from the U. of North Dakota. The school rents a gymnasium in nearby Elkton. Verdi High School has every extra-curricular activity possible, including the National Honors Society, drill teams, drama and a full range of sports programs.

The school does not run late buses and, as Stanch says, parents and students are willing to make their own transportation arrangements. Verdi also has a strong environmental education program which includes backpacking and camping. A cooperative venture with the Prairie Life Environmental Education Program enhances outdoor projects. The school's computer is linked with a computer in Marshall and both science and math programs are available to students.

Stanch, who teaches senior English and journalism, says the small size of the classes (the largest class is 16 students) allows for tutorial arrangements and more work on higher level thinking skills. He also says it enables students to receive immediate feed-

back concerning their work and allows teachers to "tie up loose ends." Like Mountain Lake High, Verdi has a strong adviser-advisee system.

Another academic K-12 school also shows the high degree of participation in extra-curricular activities in exemplary rural schools. Morgan School is located in rich farmland ten miles south of Minneapolis. It is one of four school districts in a cooperative service unit. Morgan School, like a number of other schools in Minnesota, has innovative computer science and other programs. This 350-pupil school has courses in German, television production, broadcasting and music.

Principal Marvin Niedin says the school is innovative because the staff is enthusiastic and willing to make changes. "The role of a good principal should be to get teachers enthused and then step back," Niedin says.

Students have received state awards for their computer programs. Not only does the school offer computer courses, high school students have written programs for elementary students. A project is currently underway to develop computer programs for subjects at the secondary level. Seven microcomputers are in use by students. One computer is programmed to handle the payroll but Niedin says plans include programming it to handle attendance, scheduling, record keeping and IEPs.

Morgan also has a statewide reputation for its music, broadcasting and earth science courses. Some 90% of Morgan's graduates attend post-secondary institutions. Niedin says the community priorities are college bound, vocational, music and athletic programs, in that order. Special classes include business law and German. Niedin is also a strong supporter of inservice training. Teachers have completed workshops on basic skills, writing and student self-image and self-worth.

"I have a highly unique and enthusiastic group of people on my staff," Niedin says. They also contradict the notion that the number of teachers willing to teach in isolated settings is small. Niedin recently "hand picked" two teachers from more than 100 applicants for positions.

In the Catskills

A rural K-12 school in the Catskills, the South Kortright Central School, enables all students to take both college preparatory and vocational courses. All first- and second-graders are combined

in a Primary Family Unit. Reading and math programs are individualized. Ivan Beams, who serves as superintendent and principal, says South Kortright is planning a crash writing program across grades and subjects. He also says students are extremely active in such "mental" tournaments as Brain Game Team, Olympics of the Mind and other competitive scholastic programs.

The school also has a full time guidance counselor and a 10-week career program for eighth-graders.

Despite the fact that 99% of the students ride buses, participation in extra-curricular activities is excellent, according to Beams. (The school runs late buses for both the detention center and those participating in activities after school.)

"Students in small schools have a better chance of participating in extra-curricular activities which are important in building self-confidence," Beams says.

Another New York K-12 school with a strong academic emphasis is the Delhi School in Delhi. Some 70% of Delhi graduates go on to college. Students are "holding their own" on SAT scores, and the school offers full academic and extra-curricular programs. But Richard Zajack, superintendent of the district, says like many rural districts, Delhi is "property wealthy rather than income wealthy." The budget is a growing concern as heat, oil, gas and other energy costs escalate.

That people and community often make or break rural elementary schools is perhaps no more apparent than at the Clark School in Columbia, Mo. Tenacity, elbow grease and a little tender loving care is keeping an old country schoolhouse in operation. Clark School, a small school of 63 students, had been left behind for years. Somehow this Depression-era community school had escaped classification and, unfortunately, accreditation.

In Missouri, the state department of elementary and secondary education evaluates schools annually. If a district meets certain minimum standards, it receives a AA or AAA rating. But when the state inspectors last visited the Clark School, all they left behind was a list of deficiencies—from having a teacher without a bachelor's degree to having an insufficient library.

However, when Rose Fisher took over as acting principal, she told the board, teachers and parents that the problem was "the school looked like it needed love." So a team of parents, teachers and school board members decided to donate their time to give the schoolhouse a "face lift" and correct the problems outlined by the state.

They hired a physical education/music/art teacher, a part-time speech therapist, acquired special education materials and raised $300 for physical education equipment. They also obtained hundreds of books for the library and made sure all teachers had at least a bachelor's degree and state teaching certificates.

Armed with carpet, drapes, paint and other materials, the volunteers spruced up the building itself. Board members and other concerned citizens teamed up to totally re-paint the school and make other improvements.

The result? The school received AA classification after just two months of hard work.

AN EXAMPLE OF COOPERATIVE SERVICES

As in other states with large rural populations, New York has a number of education centers which provide occupational training for students and other special services. One such site serves 18 school districts in Chenango, Otsego, Madison and the western half of Delaware counties. Housed in two centers, this Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) was formed in 1967. Bob Harrold, assistant superintendent of the BOCES, says the centers offer training in 24 different careers. The BOCES also has cooperative agreements with Manpower and CETA programs. The centers provide language teachers, psychologists, special education teachers and a number of specialized health and other services for participating districts. The BOCES also makes arrangements to bring in professional performing groups such as the Joffe Ballet and Juilliard String Quartet to perform in the community.

Special Joint Projects

Eagle Bend, Minn., is the site of an exciting experiment involving three school districts. Under an experimental television license from the Federal Communications Commission, the dis-

tricts are participating in television broadcasts. Programs include school district and communication services, and instructional and information programs. Currently the station broadcasts a German class within the schools and the community. Some 20 adults are actively watching and participating in the language course.

Courses are also available to students in mass media. Students are learning the technical aspects of television and radio production as well as producing and taping live programs. Last year, for example, students taped and aired a poetry program involving fourth and fifth grade students. They also broadcast a special 1980 election program which enabled citizens to question candidates "on the air." (The system is a two-way system which means participants at primary and remote sites can communicate directly with one another.)

While the project is funded under Title IV-C, Project Director Richard Lundgren is concerned about recent FCC moves to allow the private sector to use frequencies formerly reserved for educational purposes. He urges educators to take advantage of the opportunity to use low power frequencies to broadcast local events, town meetings and sporting events. Lundgren cites the relatively low cost of low power equipment as an added incentive for doing so.

Lundgren hopes to hook up with a statewide educational network which would include satellite reception. Immediate plans for flexible use of the system include broadcasting homework assignments and advanced mathematics, science, art and current affairs classes.

Another example of a special joint project involves small schools and a local college in a cooperative seminar program.

Through State University College at Oneonta, N.Y., the Catskill Area School Study Council offers a variety of Saturday seminar courses for students recommended by participating high schools in Otsego, Delaware, Chenango and Schoharie Counties. Begun in 1958, the project for "able and ambitious" youngsters, has included such offerings as computer programming, meteorology, karate, creative writing and conversational German. Lawrence Heldman at State University College coordinates these efforts.

Summary

While effective rural schools share all of the characteristics of exemplary schools—strong leadership, positive school climate, well-designed curricula and good classroom and building-wide management practices—they also have a high degree of community support.

Chapter 7

Recommendations

How do we get more effective schools? A number of educators, researchers, journalists and parents who have studied and worked toward more effective schools offered their suggestions for this report.

Researchers

Peter Mortimere, a member of the research team which produced *Fifteen Thousand Hours*, believes that working on school climate is the first step toward more effective schools. Among these factors: teacher and student attitudes toward learning; teacher expectations; consistency of teacher behavior; involvement of students in decision making; student participation in assemblies and teacher "cues" and classroom management.

Mortimere suggests to improve school "ethos" or climate:

- **Develop strong leadership.** Principals should take stands and involve the faculty in decision making.
- **Set high expectations for student achievement.**
- **Provide fair and immediate feedback.**

Wilbur Brookover of Michigan State U. agrees that school climate, particularly those aspects pertaining to teacher attitudes, should be the first elements tackled in any attempt to improve schools.

"If teachers do not believe students can learn, then they are not likely to teach," Brookover says.

Brookover says educators must examine the **culture of the school** (beliefs, values, expectations); the **structure of the school** (tracking, class organization); and **instructional practices** (interaction between teachers and students, competition, teacher reinforcement patterns).

He also favors mastery learning and group and team competition as effective instructional strategies for improving school climate.

(A useful resource is *School Learning Climate and Student Achievement* by L. W. Lezotte, Brookover and others.)

Lawrence W. Lezotte, also of Michigan State U., has a number of suggestions for building more effective schools including,

- Involve all or nearly all the members of the school social system in the change process.
- Start with locally defined problems and concerns and identify criteria for improvement.
- Devise a procedure for evaluating and monitoring progress as an integral part of any planned change program.

Lezotte also says school districts could benefit from conducting their own version of an effective school research study.

Eugene Howard, director of School Leadership and Improvement, a project of the Colorado Dept. of Education, has developed an eight-step process for improving school climate.

Briefly stated, these steps are: (1) form a school climate improvement committee; (2) collect base-line data about the school's climate; (3) raise the level of faculty, parent and student awareness; (4) assess the school's climate through activities, programs and projects; (5) brainstorm and set priorities to translate assessment information into effective action plans; (6) organize task forces to handle specific action plans; (7) carry out task force work; and (8) repeat the cycle.

Keep Focus Close

As mentioned in Chapter 2, John Goodlad believes curriculum should be restructured to focus on four broad educational goals: intellectual, citizenship, vocational and personal.

While Goodlad is cautious about simplistic solutions, he says to be effective, change must occur at the local level. "Individual schools must be assisted by the **local** central office to meet the four broad goals mentioned. Any recommendation at the federal or state level will do as much harm as good," Goodlad says.

He also says the principal, parents and staff must make a careful appraisal of the local situation, particularly the many perceptions about the school. "How do parents perceive the school?" "How does the staff relate to students?" are among the questions to

explore. Goodlad feels educators need a simple "climate instrument" which measures those perspectives.

"We're discovering that parents are most concerned about whether or not teachers care about their child, and although parental interest in academic areas tapers off after their children reach about the fourth grade, parents do show concern if the academic emphasis of the school is less than 50%," he says.

James Comer recently received the Rockefeller Public Service Award for his direction of a school improvement effort at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Elementary School in New Haven, Conn.

ANOTHER APPROACH

Herbert Klausmier, director, Wisconsin Program for the Improvement and Renewal of Secondary Education, has developed a number of workshops and publications concerning school improvement. Klausmier has the following recommendations:

- Start with an established school improvement committee. At first the committee should consist of the principal, teachers and counselors. Klausmeier feels the professional staff should develop broad policies and plans and then bring parents and students into the planning process.
- Gather information to determine student achievement, attitudes and self concept. Discipline and evaluation policies should be reviewed and school records should be carefully examined.
- Develop strategies and mechanisms for bringing about the desired changes.

The Wisconsin project has also developed objectives for improving secondary education which include evaluation, student decision making, personalized student advising and programs designed to meet individual needs.

Comer and a mental health team from the Yale Child Study Center worked with the staff, parents and students at the school for nearly nine years. He says school climate changed appreciably in three years but clear improvements in academic achievement were seven years in the making. However, a second experiment at Brennan Rodgers School, also in New Haven, brought about school climate improvement within a year or two and academic improvements within three years.

"We had a better understanding of what we were doing and experienced less resistance in the community due to our first success," Comer says. He attributes the success of the project to both parental and teacher decision making in the project.

"There is a vital need to bring parents and teachers into the decision making process in the school to identify problems and develop curriculum and extra-curricular activities," Comer says.

He identifies the following steps in the process:

- **Establish a governance body of parents, counselors, teachers and teachers' aides.** Comer says the key here is to allow counselors and mental health workers to work toward strengthening the total operation of the school rather than limiting them to working with individual children.
- **Set mutual goals and directions which include staff and curriculum development programs.** As climate begins to change, this frees staff energy to spend on curriculum and staff development, Comer says. "It is then possible to shape the curricular, psychological, sociological and academic direction of the total school program." Comer also established a Learning Center which screened children on the basis of academic and social needs.
- **Look at resources and assign the best possible people to do the job.** Comer says parents were vital resources in leading extra-curricular activities. These were seen as integral aspects of the school program and not as "frills."

  Comer also helped design a social skills curriculum for inner-city children which focused on those skills students need to be responsible adults. The four areas included politics and government, economics and business, nutrition and health and leisure and spiritual.

"Students learned how to make arrangements to bring speakers into the school, how to ask 'tough' questions of political candidates and how to use their leisure time in more productive ways," Comer says. Every child at the school became involved in activities, including musical and dramatic productions.

The school became one of the top five in the city in attendance, and as of 1980 there had been no serious discipline problems in five years. The mental health team taught students how to verbalize and negotiate rather than fight, which contributed greatly to the decrease in disciplinary incidents at the school.

Other Projects

Pennsylvania has been engaged in a school improvement program in 29 local school districts. Its purpose is to help schools analyze their needs in basic skill areas and improve performance by using the best available instructional programs and techniques. The Pennsylvania School Improvement Program brings an outside school assistance team together with local staff to develop and implement a realistic improvement plan.

One major product of four years of work is a "checklist of 13 reminders for school improvement activities." These include: (1) assessing a school's readiness for change; (2) administrative commitment; (3) identifying leadership staff for the program; (4) using the school building as the target; (5) setting program priorities; (6) involving teachers in decision-making; (7) involving the community; (8) communicating effectively; (9) using a structured but flexible problem-solving process; (10) obtaining pertinent school data; (11) gathering student achievement data; (12) identifying possible solution sources; and (13) committing adequate resources to program components. More detailed information is available from the Bureau of Research and Evaluation, Pennsylvania Dept. of Education, 333 Market St., Harrisburg, PA 17126.

From the Trenches

Robert Schain, principal of Wingate High School in Brooklyn, feels a principal first needs to assess the problems within the school and determine how they arise. "Think of alternatives, develop activities and monitor results," he says. Staff development is part-and-parcel of this process, according to Schain. He also feels that if administrators "deal with the symptoms, then school climate will change." To accomplish this, Schain says administrators need considerable human relations, teaching and curriculum skills.

EDMONDS' ADVICE

Ronald Edmonds, from his research and experience with the school improvement project in New York City, has the following recommendations for building more effective schools:

- **Assess the current situation specifically. Find strengths and weaknesses.**
- **Determine specific areas of school life which need improvement such as meetings, instructional strategies and pupil performance.**
- **Go after improving various climate variables simultaneously.**
- **Get technical assistance where needed.**

Fermen Warnock, superintendent of Condon Administrative District #25 in Oregon, says the following elements are needed for effective schools:

- Staff involvement from the beginning in any school improvement effort;
- Good personnel and inservice programs;
- An informed budget committee to make the program go.

Michael Keown, principal of Condon High School, identifies the following characteristics of effective schools:

- Teachers who set a positive tone for school spirit and respect for the school;
- A working atmosphere;
- Curriculum designed with student and teacher interests in mind;
- A good custodial crew and support staff;
- Community support.

Keown also suggests administrators start with one element and build upon it.

Maureen Larkin, who is heading up a school improvement effort in the Milwaukee Public Schools, says attitudinal change is

needed first. For this reason, the strategy used in Milwaukee involves teacher expectation seminars as well as inservice programs to enable principals to visit successful schools and discuss effective approaches.

Harry Dennis is a former principal of several junior and senior high schools in Toledo, Ohio. Over the years, Dennis developed a reputation as a "troubleshooter"—a principal who was able to go into a "rough" school and "turn it around." Dennis has the following recommendations for principals who want to build more effective schools:

- First analyze the weak and strong points of the people with whom you are working and analyze your clientele.
- Meet with parents. Dennis suggests meeting with parents and citizens in churches and other community centers. He also recommends talking with parents in their homes about important issues or new plans.
- Set up strong vocational and other projects with business leaders in the community. Dennis feels good administrators usually have some type of industrial background. Such a background aids in human relations, organizational and management skills, he says.
- Create a climate for improving the school and the community through projects and partnerships. "Principals must get out into the community," Dennis says. "It's the only way to go."

He also feels programs designed to fit individual needs, evaluation of teachers and a "fair and unbiased approach" to discipline are important.

Pattie Bledsoe, principal of Vandiver Elementary School in Tulsa, Okla., has presented several workshops on school climate. She formerly was principal of another elementary school where she implemented an "open" curriculum in a "closed" situation. "The most important quality a principal needs is the ability to accept children and staff where they are," Bledsoe says, "and start building from there."

Goals must be established for school improvement so the staff, students and community are all working from the same base of operation, she says, adding that activities developed to reach those goals are particularly important.

Activities Bledsoe has used to build a positive school climate include: gathering children together in one large body to work toward a common goal; setting up parent tours and special pro-

grams; school assemblies; special awards for achievement and good conduct; and a positive approach to discipline.

Part of this positive approach includes a "good news" bench in the office where children who have done something outstanding are allowed to sit and share their "good news" with those who pass by.

Bledsoe says the open space concept did cause some discipline problems at first. However, the staff underwent staff development training on assertive and positive discipline techniques as well as a number of other activities which build staff and school cohesiveness. Activities included an assessment of school climate using a formal climate instrument and increased communication with the community. The staff designed and evaluated the curriculum together and planned a number of special projects for students including a school musical, poetry readings and silent "read ins."

RESEARCH-BASED CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS

- Teachers hold high expectations for students.
- There is frequent monitoring of student progress.
- The classroom climate for learning is characterized as "business-like" with heavily-directed student activity and an achievement orientation.
- Materials used are at the appropriate level of difficulty—neither too hard nor too easy.
- Academic engaged time on task is related to achievement but there is a point of no return on time.
- Effective teachers routinize classroom management skills which help assure adequate time on task.
- Students have the opportunity to learn criterion materials.
- Someone is giving leadership to reading and mathematics teachers.

Gordon Cawelti
Executive Director
Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development

Five Components of a Good School

Summary of a Policy Statement From The Education Commission of the States

- Schools place a "high value on the uniqueness of the individual." Teachers look for and emphasize strong points.
- Achievement is the school's focus and instruction time is protected from interruptions and intrusions. Time structures permit a "high degree of flexibility" and students are given the time they need on tasks. Attention is given to aesthetic, moral and social development, as well as intellectual growth. Instruction is monitored and evaluated for quality.
- Activities use the resources of the total community. Students, parents and community members make decisions about school processes.
- The school is realistic in its undertakings, recognizing its limitations. The principal is the key person in the school.
- Balance is achieved between differences or opposing forces. Students with diverse backgrounds are brought together. Organization is provided without bureaucracy. The focus is on the needs and goals of students.

Jim Monasmith, principal of Colville High School in Washington, also suggests starting with a formal climate assessment and developing a positive school climate through school-wide activities and communication with the community. As has already been mentioned, Monasmith writes a weekly newspaper column discussing "good news" at the school. He also emphasizes student decision-making and responsibility.

Eliot Wigginton also stresses the importance of school climate, student decision making and ties with the community. Wigginton says even every detail in the **physical** environment of a school contributes to climate. A windowless, womb-like classroom is likely to produce students who appear lifeless, just as signals to

change classes which sound like air-raid sirens, desks bolted to the floor, cement block hallways and locked doors "conspire to create an atmosphere that is alien, dehumanizing, intimidating and filled with an undercurrent of frustration."

Students in Wigginton's classes make financial as well as "content" and "artistic" decisions regarding the *Foxfire* magazine and other projects:

> The rule of thumb we use . . . is to turn over to the students all decisions concerning our organization that they themselves can be responsible for and implement to completion. This they do in an atmosphere where they learn to weigh the possible consequences of such decisions for themselves and the organization, and where mistakes that are made are accepted as new opportunities to learn—not as opportunities to condemn the students who made them.

Wigginton feels students should not make all decisions, such as whether or not to rehire teachers, but he does feel students should be given more than "token" responsibilities.

Wigginton also sees the school and the community as one. More than simply using the community as a resource, Wigginton says, "students and teachers must be engaged directly with the community-at-large, forging two-way relationships that not only educate, but also endure and make a difference in the quality of life."

Moreover, Wigginton says, the atmosphere inside the school should be one of fermentation, excitement and anticipation—"the feeling that something is **happening** that is good and worth being a part of—all laced with a generous dose of the unexpected."

Checklists for Parents

Many parent organizations and other groups have developed checklists and materials for non-professionals to help on school effectiveness.

The National Education Association has a checklist for appraising schools. Points include individualized attention to meeting student needs; a broad curriculum; enthusiastic, alert teachers; written personnel policies; a safe, efficient and pleasant building; and superior administrative leadership that stimulates quality teaching and maintains open lines of communication with staff and the general public.

The Council for Basic Education has developed a checklist for citizens, "How Effective Are Your Schools," which contains a number of specific questions under the broad headings of administrative leadership, emphasis on academic achievement, assessment of student progress, teachers' values and expectations, climate and support from parents and other citizens.

At a conference on effective schools held by the National Committee for Citizens in Education, participants chose the following criteria as their top priorities for good schools:

- Leadership by the principal and designated others
- Evaluation of student progress, the school and staff
- Consensus on goals and objectives for schools and classroom teachers
- Parent involvement in school governance
- Affirmation of parent participation
- High expectations for all students and a focus on academic goals
- The school as a problem-solving unit
- Harmony between research on the learning process and practice
- Training for all members of the school community, not just teachers
- A positive physical and psychological school climate

Then, too, citizens' responses to the annual Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools suggest ways to improve schools. When asked to suggest how to improve education in their communities, 1980 survey respondents listed:

- Well educated teachers and principals
- Emphasis on basics such as reading, writing and computation
- Teachers and principals personally interested in progress of students
- Good parent/teacher relationships
- Careful check on student progress and effort

In a recent article for *Better Homes and Gardens*, Dan Kaercher gives some tips for parents who want to help solve problems in their schools:

- Meet with your youngster's teachers
- Get acquainted with the school principal
- Spend a few hours at the school

- Review school board policies on curriculum, teaching objectives, discipline, parent involvement and other school functions
- Learn the names of school board members and key administration officials and their responsibilities

The article says parents should get involved in initiating change and decisions regarding curriculum, testing, textbook selection, discipline and the school budget.

A PARENT BILL OF RIGHTS

In a paper prepared for the National Forum of Leaders of Educational Organizations, Dale Mann says he would like to see someone develop a parents' "bill of rights."

"Before any educator could talk to any parent, they would have to read the parent a statement like the following:

'As a parent with a child here it is my professional duty to inform you of your right to have in this school:

- Strong leadership
- High expectations of children's and teachers' performance
- An orderly, pleasant atmosphere
- An emphasis on the basics
- Frequent evaluation of pupil and teacher performance
- A variety of curricula linked to those evaluations.'"

Jo Malmstem, Minnesota lobbyist for the PTA, outlines a number of positive ways parents can work for more effective schools:

- Communicate the positive aspects of education to non-parents in the community. This can be done through the media and civic association meetings. Parents can also hold

meetings in their homes and invite neighbors, board members, administrators and teacher organization leaders, Malmstem says.

- Encourage other parents to be active on advisory councils.
- Advocate the upgrading of preservice programs for teachers.
- Encourage small K-3 class size for basic skills instruction and encourage teachers to visit parents in the home.
- Talk with other parents, students and teachers about school "social" problems and develop strategies for solving them.

Malmstem says educators can help in a number of ways, too, particularly by listening to parental concerns. She also suggests both teachers and administrators try to be more neutral during negotiation periods since negative attitudes can affect student morale and "students shouldn't be caught in the middle." Malmstem is also somewhat miffed by parents who feel teachers are more interested in money than students: "Anyone in teaching today has to be dedicated since they certainly don't make the salary they could make in the private sector."

Karen Boyden is an activist parent at the Peralta Elementary School in North Oakland, Calif. As a parent of two children at the school, Boyden has served on the Parent Group Board and on every committee. She has also worked as an instructional assistant and was a participant in the 1980 Conference on Home-School Alliances sponsored by the National Institute of Education.

Boyden feels effective schools are ones that help students both academically and socially so that they can ultimately become secure and useful citizens in society. She says parents and "staff need to work together to create an effective school because their goals are the same—to create literate and responsible citizens."

"Good communication is the key," Boyden says. "Parents need to take the time to support staff (by going to parent nights, serving on school committees, supporting fund-raisers, etc.). Staff people need to make parents feel welcome at school." She feels "the myth of the 'all-knowing' teacher" must be broken down so all parents, regardless of their educational background, feel comfortable coming to school and feel their contributions are worthwhile and valued.

"Parents and staff working together can move mountains," Boyden says. "Over the years at Peralta I have seen many instances where parents and staff have worked together to bring an issue before the district, administration or school board and have been successful in bringing about policy changes which have been in the best interests of our children."

Besides the powerful political force created by parents and staff working together, Boyden feels the most important impact parents and staff can have is on the learning of children. "Good communication between parents and staff makes for good learning in the classroom. Consideration of individual student learning modes, personal needs and strengths is not only extremely important but pays off on objective criteria such as standardized tests," Boyden says.

What Do Students Think?

The Connecticut Department of Education recently held a youth conference on the topic "What do high school students think is needed to make Connecticut schools more effective?"

About 170 students from across the state participated, discussing effective programs, teachers, administrators, students and community members and resources.

Here are some selected comments from the proceedings:

Principals: It is very important that the principal be involved in school activities—extra-curricular as well as curricular. A principal should be involved not only in the business affairs of the school, but being a teacher or coach is a good way for him (or her) to communicate support and enthusiasm for the students at the school. Attending class meetings and working with the student council should also be a regular part of the principal's schedule. He or she should also attend student advisory council meetings. The principal should hold high expectations concerning all aspects of the school. He/she should convey support to all students, staff and community. The principal should insure equal opportunities involving school functions.

Program: Develop more career exploration programs; college preparatory students should be able to take technical or vocational classes; and be provided more consumer subjects in schools.

Conclusion

This report has examined characteristics of effective schools and it must seem obvious by now that schools are only as effective as the people and ideas which shape them. In this regard Wigginton's advice is particularly instructive:

> Above all, move. Refuse to accept the status quo. Refuse to allow yourself to believe that you have finally found 'the way.' **Know** that despite the fact public schools are less than perfect learning environments, within them exciting and creative environments can be nourished where genuine learning does take place; with sensitive leadership those environments can spread within the system to infect the whole and to embrace the surrounding communities and the larger community of man to the ultimate benefit of all.
>
> (from Introduction to *Foxfire 6*)

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